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GAIJIN!

V.02 \$9.95

AUSTRALASIAN SUB CULT MAGAZINE

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MANGA & TOYS

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MECHA!

SPECIAL FEATURE: HISTORY OF  
MOBILE SUITS & GIANT ROBOTS

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LOOK THE SAME?  
TAKE THE TEST!

J-GIRLS:  
COOLEST WOMEN  
IN THE WORLD?!

ASIAN DUB  
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DRUM N BASS LEGENDS TOUR OZ

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW:  
**JOHN WOO**  
HAS MR HARD BOILED SOLD OUT?

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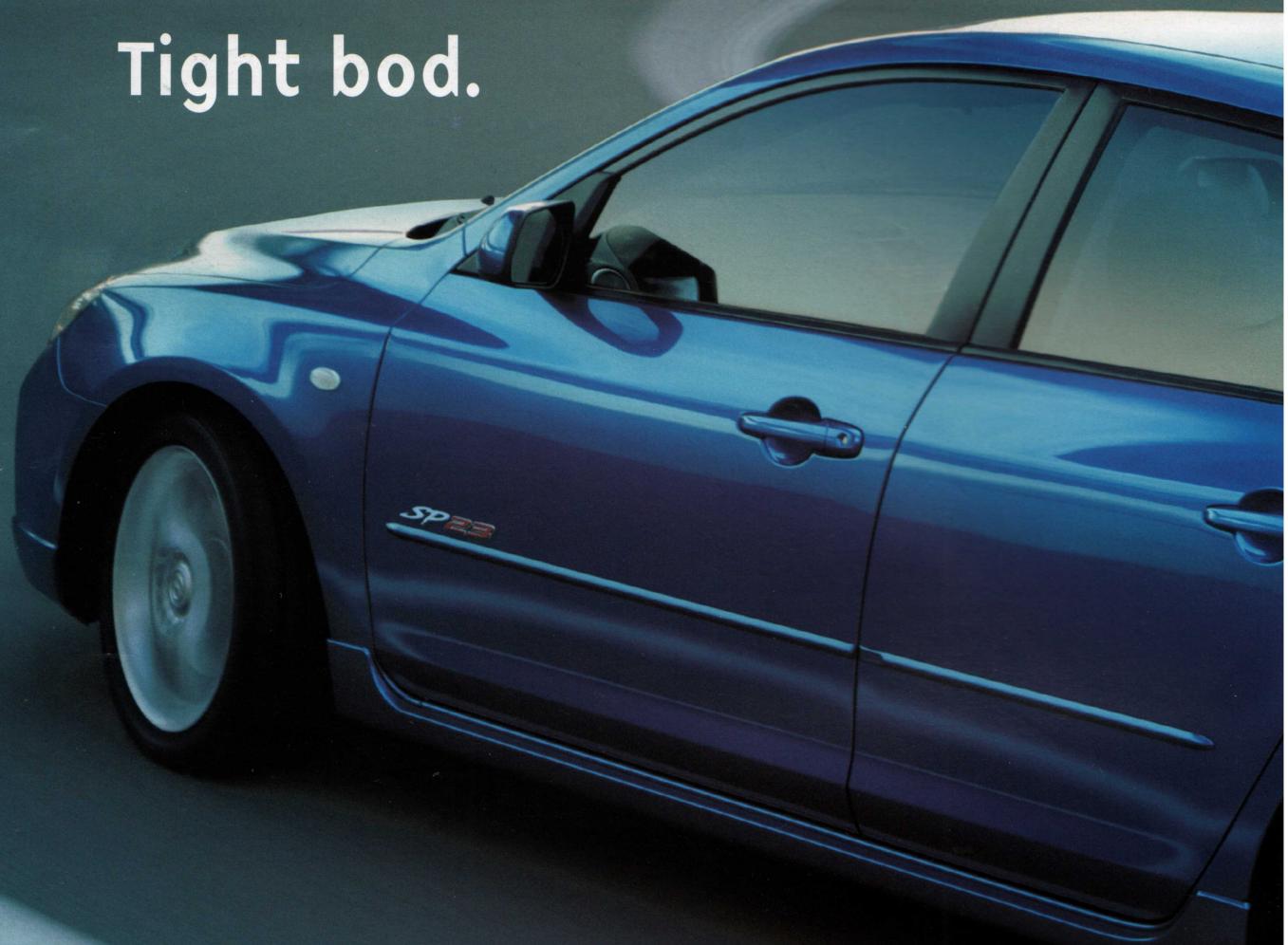
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02



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## What's your flavour?

Remember when the local Asian *caf* was an exotic eatery? The family who ran my local had been living in Australia since the early nineteenth



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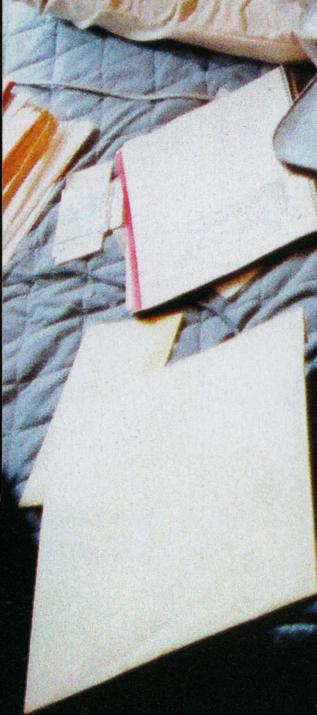
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century, so they had plenty of time to adjust their menus to the blah tastes of the mostly-English-origin locals. But then non-Asian Aussies seemed to get a culinary clue en masse some time in the mid-1980s.

Maybe our tastes expanded as travel to Asia became cheaper and easier... maybe lifestyle media and immigration were bigger influences? Whatever, Asian cuisine became flavour of the year / decade / new

millennium. Foodies in the cities might have enjoyed 'authentic' Asian food all their lives, but for the rest of the population used to ordering Chicken Chow Mein, Sweet & Sour Pork, and Special Fried Rice, many

**EDITORIAL**

**EDITOR:** STUART RIDLEY editor@gaijinmag.com

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:** CREED CHRIS O'HANLON AND KOMALA SINGH

**BOOKS:** MELANIE FARR & CLAIRE DOBLE

**FASHION:** AMY GRIFFITHS

**FILM:** DAVID KIDD & HEROIC CINEMA

**GAMES:** JOHN GILLOOLY

**MONKEYS & ROBOTS:** DARREN ELLIS

**WISDOM:** TIM DEAN

**DESIGN**

**HEAD OF DESIGN:** KATE PODGER kpodger@ajb.com.au

**DESIGN CONCEPT:** STUART TORKINGTON

**DESIGNERS:** RACHEL HUTCHINSON, PHIL JORGE, TIM MCPHERSON

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** PATRICK ALEXANDER, DAN DOUGLAS, HIRATA ETSUKO, HILBERT HO, DOUG HOLGATE, GARY LAU, VERN REYES

**PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY:** DIEU TAN PHOTOGRAPHY

**ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION PHOTOGRAPHY:** TIM LEVY

**COVER ART + MECHA POSTER:** ALEX FRY

**CONTRIBUTORS**

JONATHAN ALLEY, SEAN BODEN, DAVID BROWN, DONOVAN CHEUNG, EUGENE CHAN, SIOBHAN CHAPMAN, KEVIN CHEUNG, RUSSELL EDWARDS, KELLY FOULSTONE, DYLAN GRIFFITHS, ALISON JOBLING, TERRY KERNS, LUI YU MING, JONATHON MCCOY, MARK MORRISON, KRISTEL PROCTOR, CEEN RIDOUT, MICHELLE STARR, DENI STONER, JAKE SURMAN, FRED TOPEL, ANDREW L. URBAN, LEFRY VERGHESE, ADRIAN WHITE, STUART WILLIS

**PRODUCTION**

**HEAD OF PRODUCTION:** ANGELA MCKINNON

amckinon@ajb.com.au

**PRODUCTION COORDINATOR:** MELANIE WHITFIELD

**TRAFFIC COORDINATOR:** MARISSA MCGARRY

**SENIOR SUB EDITOR:** MELANIE FARR

**SUB EDITOR:** CLAIRE DOBLE

**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** subscriptions@gaijinmag.com

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ADVERTISING + MARKETING

T +61 2 8399 3611 | T +61 2 8399 3622

**NATIONAL ADVERTISING MANAGERS:**

CATHY SNELL csnell@ajb.com.au

JON WESTNEDGE jwestnedge@ajb.com.au

**HEAD OF MARKETING:** KATE IMBERTI kimberti@ajb.com.au

**(ajb.publishing)**

AJB Publishing

t +61 2 8399 3611 | t +61 2 8399 3622

Unit 2-5/44-70 Rosehill Street,

Redfern NSW 2016 Australia

**MANAGING DIRECTOR:** Adrian Jenkins ajenkins@ajb.com.au

**GENERAL MANAGER:** Simon Corbett scorbett@ajb.com.au

**SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES**

(INCLUDING CHANGE OF ADDRESS)

AUST - T +61 2 9492 7399 F +61 2 9492 7310

e subscriptions@gaijinmag.com

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**Editorial and product submission:** *Gaijin! Magazine* welcomes all information on new products and events for possible editorial coverage. However, we respectfully point out that the magazine is not obliged to either review or return unsolicited products.

The editor welcomes ideas for articles, preferably sent in outline form, with details of the author's background and a few short samples of previously published work. We cannot accept responsibility for any unsolicited copy and stress that it may take some time for a reply relating to these submissions to be sent out.

**Reader competition entries:** all submissions must be the original work of the person submitting, and submitted works become the property of AJB Publishing.

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flavours of Asia are still 'new'. One trend gives birth to another. Most of the scenes we cover have been bubbling for ages, but few are mainstream yet. If anime and action flicks are the Sushi and Peking Duck of today, what is the Shabu Shabu of tomorrow?

**Stuart Ridley editor@gaijinmag.com**

p.s. Where's the freakin' rice in this issue?

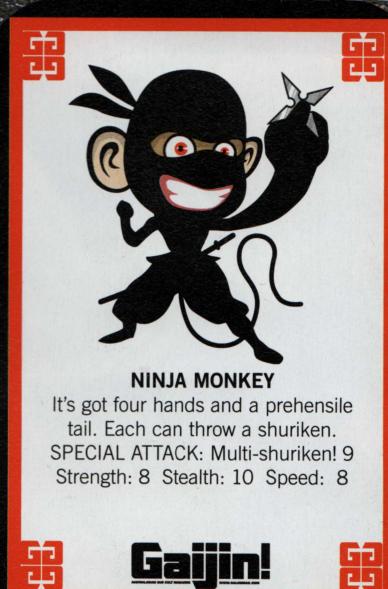
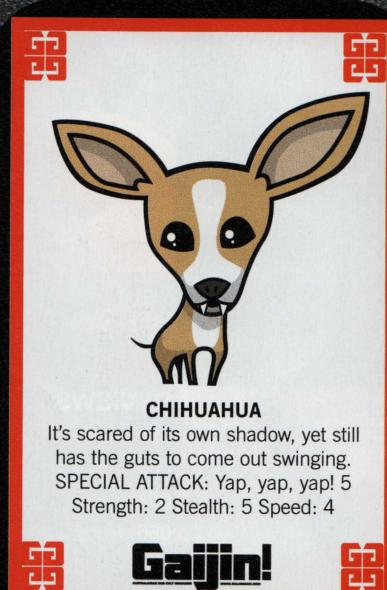
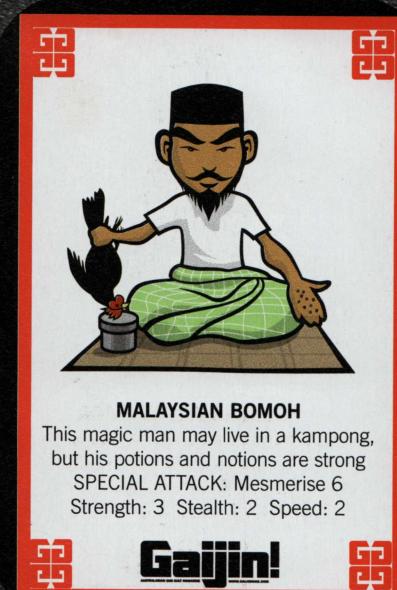


# MERCHANDISE PROTOTYPE: FIGHT! CARDS V.02

Let the kids keep their freakin' Pokey Man/You-Gee-Oh!/Card Captor Saké-ra sets... you don't want those. You want these. Because card games aren't just for little punks.

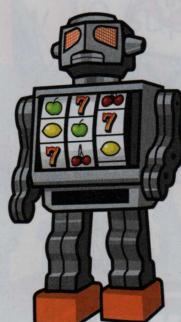
## HOW TO PLAY.

1. Cut out each of these cards and stick them onto strong cardboard.
2. Wait a few more issues until you can make the whole set.
3. Shuffle your pack and give half to a mate, so that each of you can only see the card on top.
4. Fight! Start with the card on top and say: 'I have <card name - eg. Ninja Monkey> with <score for some attribute eg. Stealth: 10>. What do you have?'
5. Your mate should look at their top card, and say: 'Well, I have <card name - eg. Samurai> with <corresponding score, eg. Stealth: 5>, so you win. (Or lose.) You get the idea. Winner takes the loser's top card and announces the next fight. Repeat until someone loses all their cards and cries like a baby.'
6. If you missed out on getting the first set in *Gaijin!* V.01 you've lost out on owning the almighty Massive Cock with super trumping powers. So order the back issue. Some day we'll get around to producing the genuine merchandise too.



## ILLUSTRATOR: HILBERT HO

When Hilbert was growing up in Malaysia he saw one too many Tapirs all flopped out. But why did he have to share those memories?

**TIN ROBOT**

He's from the world of tomorrow, today.  
SPECIAL ATTACK: Sharp edges 6  
Strength: 5 Stealth: 3 Speed: 2

**SAMURAI**

He's prepared to die with honour.  
Are you?  
SPECIAL ATTACK: Slice 9  
Strength: 8 Stealth: 6 Speed: 7

**TERRACOTTA WARRIOR**

He's been burnt in a kiln and buried for centuries. He's got a grudge.  
SPECIAL ATTACK: Quietude 5  
Strength: 7 Stealth: 0 Speed: 0

**ROBOT BOY**

The cute robot boy everyone wants to adopt.  
SPECIAL ATTACK: Bum gun 7  
Strength: 4 Stealth: 4 Speed: 7

**SUMO WRESTLER**

It's wrong to assume most fat people are jolly.  
SPECIAL ATTACK: Wedgie 8  
Strength: 7 Stealth: 1 Speed: 4

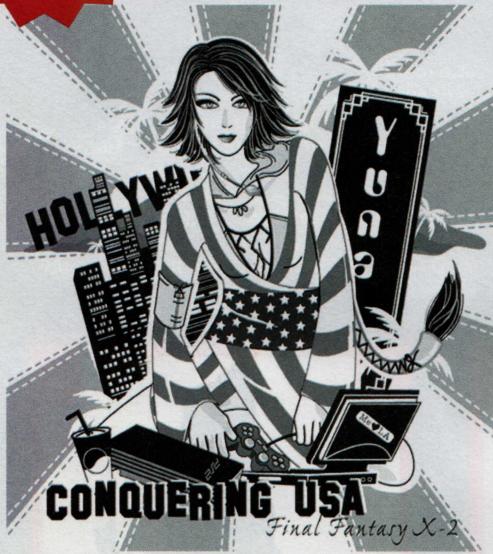
**TAPIR**

This huge beast can disappear in the jungle, but what is that *thing*?  
SPECIAL ATTACK: Choke 7  
Strength: 5 Stealth: 7 Speed: 4

**Gaijin!**
**Gaijin!**
**Gaijin!**
**Gaijin!**

ROUND 2  
WINNERS!

# FINAL FANTASY X-2 FAN ART COMPETITION



Top L-R: Andree Malawi, NSW. Ashley Leung, VIC . Middle L-R: Kaoro, N/A. Jennifer Lee, NSW. Steven Preston, QLD.

We asked for creativity in the Final Fantasy X-2 Fan Art comp. . . and loads of talented artists delivered! See over for info on our latest comp! (Visit [www.gaijinmag.com](http://www.gaijinmag.com) for more Fan Art pics.)



FINALISTS!



Bottom L-R: (Left, above) Amy Patterson, QLD. (left, below) Jynx Freak, NSW. Libbie, NSW. Anthony Cheung, QLD.

# MANGA UNIVERSITY FAN ART CONTEST!

## DIRECT FROM JAPAN!

A share of \$2,000 worth of prizes, including *How to Draw Manga*™ and *Manga University*™ books PLUS a selection of manga art supplies to be won by 10 super creative artists!



## DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS 22 MARCH 2004!

**START DRAWING A MANGA SELF PORTRAIT NOW – AND REMEMBER, THE MOST CREATIVE ENTRIES WILL HAVE THE BEST CHANCE AT WINNING!**

Winners' and finalists' art will be published in *Gaijin! V.03*, on sale April 2004 – and then uploaded to the world famous manga art website: [www.mangauniversity.com](http://www.mangauniversity.com)

10 Fan Art winners will each score a prize pack worth \$200:  
 • 6 titles from the *How to Draw Manga*™ and *Manga University*™ catalogs PLUS  
 • Manga art supplies (pens, paper, screen tones and templates)

**MORE INFO ABOUT MANGA UNIVERSITY:**  
[www.mangauniversity.com](http://www.mangauniversity.com)

WANT TO  
WIN SOME  
OF THESE?

DRAW A  
MANGA SELF  
PORTRAIT!



## HOW TO ENTER:

- (1) Draw an original manga character based on a self-portrait. Make it fantasy, action, or cute & romantic. (2.1) Save the picture as a high-res JPEG (keep filesize <500KB) and email it to [win@gaijinmag.com](mailto:win@gaijinmag.com) along with your name & address OR
- (2.2) Post your entry to: **Gaijin! Manga University Tokyo Fan Art, PO Box 2286, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.**
- (3) Visit our Website [www.gaijinmag.com](http://www.gaijinmag.com) for full competition details, including terms and conditions.
- (4) Deadline for entries: 22 March 2004.

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY:** 1. The promoter is AJB Publishing Pty Ltd (ACN 083 063 914) of Suite 2-5/44-70 Rosehill Street, Redfern NSW 2016. Promotion period is from 9am on 25.02.2004 to midday on 22.03.2004. 2. Entry is open to residents of Australia. However, management and employees of AJB Publishing Pty Ltd and their immediate families, as well as any advertising, marketing or promotional firms associated with this promotion, are not eligible to enter. 3. Enter by posting or emailing your original fan art, along with your name, age and address to AJB Publishing Pty Ltd. Post: *Gaijin! Manga University Tokyo Fan Art, PO Box 2286, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012*; OR email [win@gaijinmag.com](mailto:win@gaijinmag.com). 4. All entries must be original artwork, based on a manga self-portrait created by the entrant. 5. Ten winners will be selected by a panel of judges at the offices of AJB Publishing Pty Ltd at 5pm on 22.03.2004. Winners will be notified by mail and published in the third issue of *Gaijin! Magazine* on sale April 2004. 6. The prizes are not transferable. 7. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. 8. The promoter reserves the right to publish each winner's and finalist's name and State for promotional purposes. 9. All entries will become the property of AJB Publishing Pty Ltd. 10. Each Manga University prize pack is worth RRP \$200.



I'm looking for a Japanese Girlfriend. Our most popular wacky Japanese T-shirt ever, it reaches out to all Japanese females who see it with a bizarre, fun message. And who knows? It could be the start of a beautiful relationship!



**Japanese Snacks.** Japan is home to a huge array of zany but delicious snack foods, like Pocky stick snacks, Gummi Sushi, Black Black caffeine gum, Pocari Sweat, and more. J-List stocks over 100 varieties for you!



**Shiroi Stuff.** We also carry a wide selection of Ghost in the Shell creator Shirow Masamune's bilingual manga, poster books, hentai artwork and more. Highly collectible and very hard to find.



**Baka Gaijin.** Two words a foreigner living in Japan learns pretty quickly are *baka* (stupid) and *gaijin* (foreigner). We put these words together for you — dare to be stupid with this bizarre Japanese T-shirt!



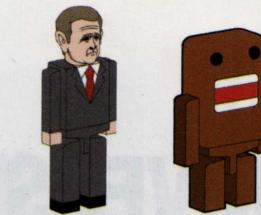
**Hentai Manga & Doujinshi.** J-List carries hundreds of quality hentai manga and amateur doujinshi comics, featuring virtually all famous artists and studios. Come and browse our extensive selection.



**Beware of Perverts.** Men touching women on trains is a big problem in Japan, and there actually are signs that say "Beware of perverts." Our wacky T-shirt is sure to get you lots of attention, for better or worse.



**Unique Toys.** We also stock many rare toy items from Japan, including Kubrick figures, Japan-only Hot Wheels vehicles, and Domo-kun items. Many miniature model and gashapon toys as well!



**Block Design T-shirts.** Show your uniqueness with these bold parody T-shirt designs from talented artists in Japan (including our George Bush "blockhead" shirt). Totally wacky and fun to wear!



**Magazine Subscriptions.** Get a bit of Japan every month with our magazine subscriptions, with anime mags like Megami Magazine, Tokyo street fashion mag FRUITS, Gothic & Lolita Bible, and more — over 40 different titles!



**Japanese Adult Magazines and Photobooks.** J-List carries a great selection of magazines and high-quality hardcover photobooks from Japan, including rare items that are impossible to find anywhere else.



**Hoodies, Shirts for Girls.** Enjoy o wacky Japanese messages in the cold months with long-sleeved shirts and hoodies, both fashionable and ve warm. We also have fitted girls' shi that will enhance all the right lines.



**No Tattoos Allowed.** In Japanese public baths, there's always a sign stating that customers with tattoos (e.g. yakuza) are not allowed in. This was such a bizarre concept, we captured it on a T-shirt for you!



**DVDs for Adults.** Japan is home to some dynamite adult stars, and J-List brings them all to you. Most of our DVDs are "region free" and will play in any DVD player (but we sell region-free players too, just in case).



**High School Uniforms.** J-List also sells authentic high school uniforms, made by the famous Matsukameya of Nagoya. All uniforms are custom made to your size. Great for Japanophiles who want to try their own cosplay!



**Just Plain Wacky Stuff.** From the popular Japanese "mannequin drama" OH! Mikey to Japanese study aids to bizarre products like Hello Kitty to let paper and beyond, J-List is happy to sell just about any crazy thing from Japan you can think of.

J-List is a wonderful toybox of things from Japan. If you love Japan, as we do, then you'll find a home at J-List — we hope to see you soon! We also recommend our optional "Gaijin's Life in Japan" e-mail newsletter. It's like getting a postcard from Japan every week!

**www.jlist.com**

(All products, including items for adults)

**www.jbox.com**

(anime, toy, snack and other products)

## NEW JAPANESE TOYS

With *Final Fantasy X-2* out now, there are plenty of cool toys associated with the awesome new game, and others in the *Final Fantasy* range. The mini-figurine range from previous *Final Fantasy* adventures includes Cerberus (*FF VII*), Yunalesca (*FFX*), Diamond Weapon (*FF VII*), Seymour Evolution (*FFX*), Bahamut Zero (*FF VII*) and Death Gaze (*FF IX*). In two-packs for \$14.95. Continuing the mini PVC figurines craze made popular by Japanese licenses are figures from the *Alien* series: Narcissus, Space Jockey,



Nostromo, Alien, Face Hugger, Chest Burster, Dog Alien, New Alien, Drop Ship, A.P.C., USS Sulaco, Power Loader (with Lieutenant Ripley inside), Warrior, Alien Queen, New Warrior and New Born available in a collectible 3.5inch figurine set made by Konami Japan. Each mystery box will retail for \$9.95. From the anime series *Please Teacher* comes an exquisite resin statue sculpted by Tsukuru Shirashige of Mizuho Kazami. Standing 5 1/2 inches tall, it depicts the resident observer of the Galaxy Federation with her single Pocky box, left to her by her departed human father. It retails for \$184.95 and is available for special order via EB Games stores.

Kristel Proctor



of the Box Full of Fury from totaldvd.com.au: Paul Kade, TAS. (Answer 1) The Big Boss. It's a crack up when Kareem jumps up and pulls Bruce down the stairs! (Answer 2) Bruce Li.

## CROFTMINSTER ACTION MOVIE COMP WINNERS

In *Gaijin! V.01* we challenged movie-makers to create a short 30 second action scene. Up for grabs were 3 tongue-lashingly delicious sets of 6 Kotobukiya Matrix figures from Croftminster [www.croftminster.com.au](http://www.croftminster.com.au) PLUS a subscription each. Yes mate.

View the movies online at [www.gaijinmag.com](http://www.gaijinmag.com)

**Croftminster**

### WINNERS!



**DIRECTOR:** Damien Mason, VIC

**TITLE:** *Ninja vs Gundam deathmatch*

**WHAT'S TO SEE?**: The fastest, funniest *Ninja Scroll* mash up yet. It's in Flash. It starts off with a really attractive ninja. Then he meets a massive mech. They don't fall in love. The ninja starts cutting it up wild style... and then BOOM! Explosive!



**DIRECTOR:** Esther Jackman, VIC

**TITLE:** *Kill Jill*

**WHAT'S TO SEE?**: Esther & Emma Jackman wearing tracksuits, fighting with swords in a totally kick arse way. (One of the girls actually gets her arse kicked... then she cuts the other one to pay her back.) Clever filming by Malcom Dwyer and neat costumes and blood effects by Vivien Jackman. Bloody brilliant!



**DIRECTOR:** Michela Ledwidge, NSW

**TITLE:** *Kindy Royale*

**WHAT'S TO SEE?**: Michela has made a beautifully filmed lightning fast remake of *Battle Royale* for the GameCube generation, starring two primary school kids and their Aunty Michelle. Aunty dictates the (play)ground rules, the kids go crazy with flying kicks and stealth monkeybar attacks and they all fall down. Cheeky!

### The Watermelon



### FINALISTS!

**DIRECTOR:** Adrian Sugden, NSW

**TITLE:** *Training simulation: fruit run*

**WHAT'S TO SEE?**: An animation inspired by *The Matrix* with massive chunks of fruit in it. Sounds scary, but it's actually very sweet. Kawaii!



**DIRECTOR:** Anthony Cheung, QLD

**TITLE:** *The One*

**WHAT'S TO SEE?**: Anthony and his mate doing an awesome job belting the hell out of each other to a killer soundtrack and *Matrix* special effects... including bullet-time! Cyberpunk'd!



**DIRECTOR:** James Richards, SA

**TITLE:** *The Dot Matrix*

**WHAT'S TO SEE?**: James brings us the final battle between Agent Smith and Neo in a Pac-Man enters *The Matrix* flash movie. There's bullet-time and cloning and... someone gets eaten. Delicious!

# IN MEMORY OF ANITA MUI

Though she never made the crossover achieved by her *Heroic Trio* (1993) co-stars Maggie Cheung and Michelle Yeoh, throughout China, Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora, Anita Mui was a musical and movie superstar.

Born Mui Yim Fong in Hong Kong, on 10 October, 1963, Mui began her singing career in amusement parks and was only five years old when she began performing in theatres. In 1982, she won a talent contest and two years later had her first big hit with the song *Homecoming*.

Traversing the path of many a HK popster, Mui combined music with acting, making her film debut in the 1983 picture *Warrior*.

Adding to, and consolidating her fame, as the 'Asian Madonna', Mui became Jackie Chan's lover and appeared in a number of films with him including *Mr Canton and Lady Rose* (1989), *Drunken Master II* (1994) and *Rumble In The Bronx* (1996). But she was more than a mere foil for Chan's martial arts comedy. She co-starred with both Jet Li (*The Enforcer*) and Chow Yun Fat (*A Better Tomorrow III*). Likewise, Mui was an equal match for Maggie Cheung and Michelle Yeoh in what was probably Mui's most popular film, the

femme fatale martial arts free-for-all *The Heroic Trio*. However she was also highly regarded for her performance of great subtlety in Stanley Kwan's moving *Rouge*. Mui's turn in Kwan's film as a tormented ghost won her the best actress award in Taiwan's Golden Horse awards in 1987.

Despite their intimate relationship coming to an end in 1992, Chan was at her deathbed when Mui succumbed to cancer of the cervix on 30 December, 2003. The veteran of 46 music albums and over 40 films, she announced her illness publicly last September to quell the media speculation partially inspired by the death of actress sister, Ann Hui, by uterine cancer in 2000. The unmarried star was also known for her charity work, setting up the Anita Mui Charity Foundation in the 1990s.



Her latest film, *The House of Flying Daggers*, is expected to be released sometime this year.

**Russell Edwards**

Heroic-Cinema.com.au



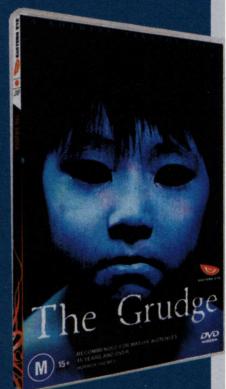
## EASTERN EYE SEES 'ACTION AND HORROR'



**EASTERN EYE**

ASIAN CINEMA

The phrase 'Asian cinema' often conjures images of manga movies, but Eastern Eye, Madman Entertainment's Asian Cinema division which officially launches in February, will release 'no anime... it's all live action and horror'.



Under this 'no anime' premise, Garry Seven, Brand Manager, Eastern Eye, said some of this year's releases would include *Volcano High* from Korea, Japanese horror film *The Grudge* and *Infernal Affairs* – a Hong Kong gangster film.

As well as newer titles, Eastern Eye would also distribute some classics, such as Japanese director Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*. 'It's my all time favourite,' said Seven, 'And not because my name's in it! If not for this film we mightn't have Asian cinema as we know it.'

According to Seven, Eastern Eye was conceptualised as a DVD/VHS distributor: 'We were releasing DVDs and VHS and the theatrical was almost an afterthought. But it makes sense to show movies at the cinema either before, or simultaneous to releasing them for the home entertainment market because they look great on the big screen.'

Catch some Eastern Eye movies at the following cinemas:

**Sydney** – Cremorne Orpheum Cinema (Feb-Mar)

**Melbourne** – Nova Cinema, *The Grudge* (Feb-Mar)

**Adelaide** – Mercury Cinema (Mar)

All films are in their original language with English subtitles.

**Claire Doble**

## MANGA PREVIEWS

In April ComicsOne releases *SNK Vs. Capcom Chaos*, the comic adaptation of the game from two of the biggest forces in beat-'em-ups. *SVC Chaos* features characters from both SNK Playmore and Capcom's rich fighting game histories: Ryu, Kyo Kusanagi, Demitri, Mai Shiranui and countless others have all gathered for their own personal reasons, yet to be revealed.

Fans of the *RahXephon* TV series can get another fix via the three-volume manga series from Viz. It features art by popular mechanical designer Yutaka Izubuchi (*Patlabor, Record of Lodoss War, Battle Angel Alita*) and is slated for release in September. A full-length *RahXephon* movie is also currently in development.

Great news for fans of J-rock and pretty boys! *Sensual Phrase* (published as *Kaikan Phrase* in Japan) will be released by Viz in April. The 17-volume series has sold more than 7.4 million copies in Japan, and spawned an actual spin-off band and a 44-episode anime series.

Speaking of J-rock, elegant and detailed Gothic Lolita stylings permeate *Doll*, a collection

of six haunting tales by Mitsukazu Mihara to be released by Tokyopop in July. Each story features Dolls, androids living alongside humans, in ways that blur the lines between the real and the synthetic and question what it means to be human.

Also in July from Tokyopop comes *Passion Fruit*, a unique collection from three artists exploring the frailty of the human condition. The first volume, *Sweat & Honey* by Mari Okazaki, will also be produced in a deluxe hardcover book format. Two female cousins learn that living

together may bring them closer to each other... or ultimately drive them apart.

**Komala Singh**



# ARRRRRH... PIRACY!



## The shadow of the Jolly Roger grows

**David Kidd talks with anti-piracy campaigner Gerard Vong about the rise of movie and CD copying, and how it's hurting legit businesses.**

**Temple Street, Hong Kong.** Racks of plastic sleeved CDs and DVDs, sometimes with a photocopied cover, often with a white sticker label, and usually a few bucks a pop. With the strength of the Aussie dollar, we're scoring six HKDs to a buck – a good time to score a copy of *Infernal Affairs* to show your unenlightened mates before Hollywood chops it up?

These days, Hong Kong is getting a lot closer than its nine-hour flight through

South-East Asia. Pirated DVDs and CDs are being sold and traded throughout Australia; from supposedly legitimate DVD stores to schoolyard trading rings. But exactly how bad is it? We spoke with an anime retailer who is campaigning against piracy – Gerard Vong, from Yorokonde / Anime Anytime ([www.animeanytime.com.au](http://www.animeanytime.com.au)), to learn more of the truth about the source, quantity and impact of piracy.

### Millions lost for legit companies

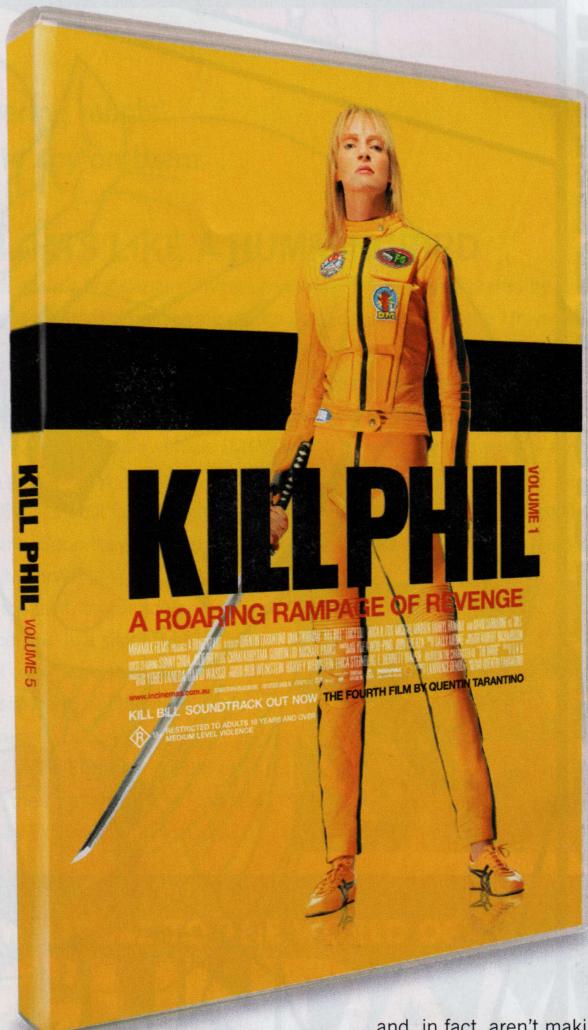
According to the MPA Worldwide Market Research 2002 study into Australian piracy, we're not doing too well. The overall breakdown of pirated DVDs and CDs in Australia has increased eight percent and the industry losses amount to around \$44m. The Australasian Film and Video Security Office (AFVSO) seized 87,713 pirated discs – a comparatively major haul to 2000's measly 2,336.

Vong confirms that piracy is a massive problem at the shopfront, especially for anime. 'Anime piracy is very widespread in Australia – almost every anime store out there sells some

bootleg items. Not just small stores in Chinatown: it's at conventions, it's in malls, it's in the CBD and it's online. You can count the number of strictly legitimate anime stores on one hand... I'm confident in saying that bootleg anime stores outnumber legitimate anime stores at least five to one.'

But optical media isn't the only source of piracy. File sharing and downloading is creeping up from behind and could potentially rival DVDs as the pirates' preferred booty. Australia was slow on the uptake for broadband internet, which is due largely to availability and relatively high pricing compared to overseas markets but decreasing prices and added benefits for local file-sharers have broken down these barriers. The Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) has noted that 21 percent of surveyed net users had illegally downloaded music, where 34 percent of the pirates were unaware that they were doing anything wrong. Figures are scarce on video downloading, however more broadband customers will allow for faster, and easier access to movies.

The answer is complex, and as yet there are no effective methods of combating it. Copy-protection methods like DeCSS encryption found on DVDs have been cracked for years



and, in fact, aren't making

any friends. 'I don't agree with

copy protection methods on things such as DVDs and audio CDs on the basis that the technology isn't well standardised and therefore causes problems for legitimate users of the product.' Says Vong, 'For example, macrovision sometimes leads to problems with older equipment; people should be allowed to listen to CDs in their computers etc...'

The supply and demand both need attention in order to stop piracy. The problem is that selling bootlegs is very, very profitable even if someone is importing them. So what is a legitimate business to do? Vong is continuing to fight it in his own way: 'We try to increase awareness of pirated items by contributing to articles such as these, distributing informative pamphlets that are against bootlegs, and by providing a service by which anime fans can ask us to verify if a product is legitimate or not. Obviously, we only stock legitimate products.'

# anime.au.04

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# ROBOT NEWS

*Gaijin! Magazine* continues its commitment to uncovering robots' plans to dominate the Earth by sending Darren Ellis to spy on them. . .

## A SOLDIER'S BEST FRIEND

Today's modern soldier carries a backbreaking amount of gear with him/her into battle, including rations, communications equipment, field dressings, water and most importantly, extra ammo. On average, this is an extra 25kg or so that needs lugging about. Bugger.

Now the US military is funding research into the creation of four-legged robot 'dogs' that would run beside unencumbered soldiers carrying all of this gear for them.

The existing prototypes are extremely clumsy – even having trouble navigating simple courses – which means that if future wars aren't fought on perfectly flat and clear planes then the robo-dogs are stuffed.

Two companies researching the robots have gone back to the drawing board, so to speak, and will study the gait of the humble canine for clues into manoeuvrability and agility. Woof!

Once the gait problems are sorted they'll move to further, harder prototypes that will be capable of walking properly, and even fighting alongside the soldiers.

They're a long way from becoming a reality though, but it truly gives new meaning to the quote 'Cry "havoc," and let slip the dogs of war'.



## RUN ROBO, RUN!

*Gaijin! Magazine* reported on the QRIO humanoid robot last issue, and its amazing *Dance Dance Revolution* world championship domination potential. We were fairly psyched then, but now we're ecstatic to report that Sony Corp has upped the ante, by making the QRIO run with both feet off the ground simultaneously... and jump. Hup hup!



**AUTHOR: DARREN ELLIS**

Darren Ellis was once threatened by the Malaysian Government with jail if he ever used the words 'economic crisis' in print again. So, economic crisis.

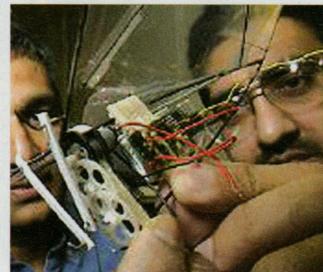
## FLOATS LIKE A HUMMINGBIRD

The world's first flapping flying ornithopter(!) has been created by the Mechanical Engineering (Mech Eng) department of the University of Delaware, whose leader envisions smart swarms of them one day silently conducting covert spying and reconnaissance missions. Nasty.

At the total opposite end of the size scale where we prefer our robots to be, this micro air vehicle (MAV) is only 15cm long and weighs a mere 18 grams. Tiny.

But it's built fairly tough, with Mylar wings and a carbon composite frame. Soon they're going to add remote control and a wireless camera to it. Pervy!

By itself, the prototype dubbed 'Sparrow' is a silent flyer, though not too intimidating. But it's designed to operate in a swarm, where it gains extra strength. If the Mech Eng geeks could only get them to interlock to form one super Sparrow-Mech though. . .



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**TRADE INQUIRIES WELCOME**

**1 ► Taiwan – January 2004**

After nearly being wiped out by humans, the Formosan macaque troops retreated to the remaining jungles, indulged in crazy, hot monkey sex, and have now swollen their army of pissed-off primates to over 250,000. Now they want their island back. Militant!

**3 ► Thailand – December 2**

A small Thai town held a banquet to thank a few very special luck-bringing primates. But when the loutish monkeys arrived the organisers were faced with an extra 3,000 gatecrashers. To quiet the angry mob, they needed three sites, nine different courses and over 1,600 kilos of grub! Hungry!

**4 ► Japan – January 2004**

As if having a whole year dedicated to them wasn't enough, the baboons and gorillas in Japan's largest monkey park have been demanding homage and gifts. And the Japanese are happy to comply, with over 18,000 people visiting the apes in the first three days of the New Year. Gifted!

**2 ► India – January 2004**

Nothing pisses a monkey off more than the cold, except maybe no grog when the bottle-o is shut. Luckily for the monkeys in a New Delhi zoo, where temps have fallen to 7°C, the zookeepers keep them well stocked with woollen wraps and jugs of rum to ward off the chill. Drunk!

**5 ► Nepal – January 2004**

A shriek of monkeys attempting to hammer out the complete works of Shakespeare in the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu have become so frustrated by the antiquated typewriters that they've started destroying bureaucrats' office equipment, biting random staff and ruining stationery. Tearing it up!

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**Gaijin!**  **EASTERN EYE**  
ASIAN CINEMA

AV Channel / Eastern Eye is offering a choice of one of these great DVDs to 50 *Gaijin!* Magazine subscribers – new and existing – just answer the following question:

**Q. Name the main character in Princess Blade?**

Now that was easy. Hard question next. If you are chosen as one of 50 subscribers to score a bonus DVD with your subscription, just let us know which of the following titles from AV Channel / Eastern Eye you would like: *Princess Blade*, *Bichunmoo*, *Volcano High*, *The Grudge* or *Seven Samurai*.

Rules: Only new or existing subscribers to *Gaijin!* Magazine can enter this competition. 10 DVDs will be awarded to existing subscribers – please quote your subscription number when entering this competition. 40 DVDs will be awarded to new subscribers – subscribe today to complete your entry. Offer ends 20 April 2004, see [www.gaijinmag.com/subscribe.asp](http://www.gaijinmag.com/subscribe.asp) for full terms and conditions.



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**Answer, Question 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

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 Princess Blade  Bichunmoo  Volcano High  The Grudge  
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## POP QUIZ

all look same?  
all look same?

Can you tell someone's race just by looking at them? Well can you? Punk!

'Asians - they all look the same!' This might sound like a racist rallying cry, but prepare for a surprise: according to Japanese-American web designer Dyske Suematsu, it might just be true.

His lighthearted website, [alllooksame.com](http://alllooksame.com), asks visitors to flick through a gallery of Asian faces and guess 'Chinese', 'Japanese' or 'Korean', testing their ability to pick out different nationalities. The results are telling.

'According to the test, most people can't,' Dyske says, noting that Asians score only slightly better than non-Asians, and both average less than half correct.

'I've always thought that it was one of those urban myths that you can tell different Asians apart... And, I'm an Asian myself.'

But he admits that, apparently, some people can. So how do they do it? What separates a Chinese face from a Japanese or Korean one? Dyske is not sure. 'For instance, there are people who think that any Asian who is fashionably dressed is Japanese. This probably comes from the media, which frequently covers the modern Japanese culture, but not so much of China or Korea. Most people's perception of Chinese, for instance, may be what you see in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.'

Dyske's 'joke' site has attracted some criticism but 'the vast majority of the comments I get are positive', he says, pointing out that most of the complaints come from non-Asians'. And as the site says, 'If you're wondering whether or not to take offence, remember, alllooksame' is not a statement. It's a question.'

Andrew Douglas



**alllooksame.com**  
Alllooksame, including images and design © 2001 KSK:STUDIOS

this person is:

- CHINESE
- JAPANESE
- KOREAN



this person is:

- CHINESE
- JAPANESE
- KOREAN



this person is:

- CHINESE
- JAPANESE
- KOREAN



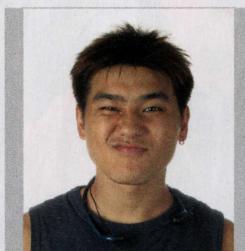
this person is:

- CHINESE
- JAPANESE
- KOREAN



this person is:

- CHINESE
- JAPANESE
- KOREAN



See how you go with this warm up quiz, then take the full test online at

**alllooksame.com**





**Profile:** Fiona Buckingham – Kyotap  
habitathabit@ yahoo.com.au

We sent Head of Design Kate Podger to meet Fiona for a bit of window shopping, and a quiet word about straps.

**Gaijin!:** What does 'Kyotap' mean?

Fiona: It's an acronym: 'keep yourself open to all possibilities'. I wanted a word with no pre-conceived identity.

**Gaijin!:** What were you doing before you became a designer?

Fiona: I was a nurse but was always interested in fashion. I'd finished my training and wasn't sure if nursing was for me, so I got together with a school friend who also wasn't sure what she wanted to do. We decided to make and sell clothes at the markets. It was great but I didn't really know about the industry so I went back to study fashion.

**Gaijin!:** Why fashion?

Fiona: It's fun! Clothes can give you a sense of identity and make you feel good. I hope I can continue designing forever! I'd love to do different projects like working on the costumes for a film or the theatre or something that is totally mad and off the wall... like designing a set of garments for the year 2045!

**Gaijin!:** Favourite materials?

Fiona: I try to work with mostly natural fibres, I like their texture and find they're the most comfortable to wear. I have been using hemp in the last two ranges which has been great but my all time favourite is wool as it is such a versatile fibre, you can do almost anything with it.

**Gaijin!:** What's with the airplane seat belts? Is it because you like planes... or harnesses... or safety apparel?

Fiona: Hmm... I have a thing with straps... I think it is a strange obsession of mine which we won't go into...

**Gaijin!:** Favourite other designers?

Fiona: Japanese designers such as Comme Des Garçons, Issey Miyake – designers for the future. Also, Belgian designers like Anne DeMeulemeester, Dries Van Noten and Martin Margiela – founders of deconstruction.

**Gaijin!:** Where do you sell your designs?

Fiona: Select boutiques in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth, and at Habit Habitat, a shop I share with Handmade label founder Tanya Angeli, 185 Parramatta Rd, Annandale, Sydney.

#### INFO:

1. **Kyotap** (Fiona Buckingham) 'Samurai Fighting Top', cotton/linen, \$70.
2. **Kyotap** 'Passenger Belt', leather/hemp, \$90.
3. **Kyotap** 'Moonwalk 3/4 pant', cotton, \$128 + 'Passenger Belt' in white, \$110.
4. **Handmade** (Tanya Angeli) 'Pink Singlet', dyed cotton, \$59.
5. **Kyotap** 'Leiya Wrap Top', linen, \$135.

**Profile: Helen Turner & Rebecca****Berger, Fitter & Turner, Helen 0405****658 265 / Rebecca 0402 123 325***Fashion Editor Amy Griffiths hooked up with Fitter & Turner to talk denim, handknitted scarves and cleavage...***Gaijin!: Why Fitter & Turner?**

Helen: Well, my last name is Turner and I am a fitter of people. The label is a blend of two opposites – me and my partner Rebecca. She chose the name.

**Gaijin!: What were you doing before you became designer?**

Helen: I've been sculpting for the last six years, I came from a Fine Arts background. I reworked a jacket, it looked all right, so I decided on a career change. I had to move from my sculpting studio, downsize, and I ended up swapping my tools for my grandmother's sewing machine. I started making – or should I say reworking clothes – to suit... well me, my opposite, and then mates. We're both very excited to be studying at East Sydney TAFE this year.

**Gaijin!: Why fashion?**

F&T: It's your armour. To some it's an ID, to others it's functional. We love being able to wear anything we want, mixing it all up and coming up with experiments.

**Gaijin!: You're big on denim aren't you?**

F&T: We're lovin' denim: love wearing it, touching it, smelling it, looking at it, just love it! You can do a lot with it: dress it up, or down, in or out.

**Gaijin!: The line you've shown us has a heavy worn-in look – is recycling going to be a common element in other lines?**

F&T: Our 'heavy worn-in look'; will see us through for a while, but everyone evolves, so we're looking forward to what pops up next.

**Gaijin!: Which designers do you rate?**

F&T: Michelle Janks – she's a spunk. Justine Taylor – we like her lines. Steve McQueen – we love his amputees.

**Gaijin!: What do you consider the bare essentials in every girl's wardrobe?**

F&T: A nice pair of sunglasses; a well-loved pair of jeans, bare feet and a low cleavage set off by a hand knitted scarf.

**Gaijin!: Where do you sell your designs?**

F&T: When we can part with them... it's mainly to mates and now friends of mates. Next the world.

**INFO:****6. Lindy Seiffert 'Dragon Fly' shown at Do Not Tumble Dry c/o BIN5Gallery@hotmail.com****7. Fitter & Turner 'Drummer' jacket \$P.O.A.****8. Fitter & Turner 'Stud' jeans with 'Red Neck'****handknitted scarf made-to-order \$P.O.A.****9. Nerida Barnes 'Scrubbed' & 10. Jessie Brett****'I' both shown at Do Not Tumble Dry****11. Handmade Chinese Jacket \$79.**



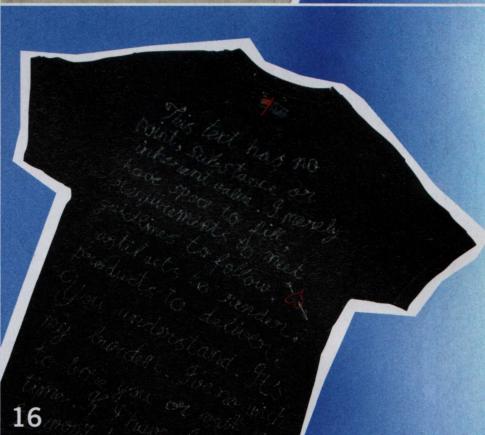
12



15



13



16



14

**Profile: Grant Cook – Afrenasia**

[www.afrenasia.com/identiware](http://www.afrenasia.com/identiware)

*Stuart Ridley talks inky screen prints wildstyle T-shirt design and love for mechs with Grant in Collingwood.*

**Gaijin!: Afrenasia eh? How the hell did you come up with a name like that?**

Grant: It involved a late night watching the movie *Naked Lunch*. The final line is 'Welcome to . . .' something. It's actually Annexia, even though it was the best name I'd ever heard, I couldn't remember it. And 'Afrenasia' was what popped into my head.

**Gaijin!: What else do you do apart from designing kick arse T-shirts?**

Grant: I'm a graphic designer by trade doing unfun corporate things and generally prostituting my talents.

**Gaijin!: Hmm . . . Nasty. What's your favourite printing technique then?**

Grant: Screen-printing is best. And no, I don't do all the printing in my back shed. A friend made a really good point when I was looking around at printing options: if you want quality you have to pay for it. My designs are simple but they have a lot of fine detail, so if I printed them myself I wouldn't get anywhere near the quality.

**Gaijin!: You sent us some Ts with mechs on because you know we're into them – what's your excuse?**

Grant: I've loved mechs since I was a wee bairn, watching *Astroboy* after school. I've always loved anime. I watched *Star Blazers* religiously.

*Robotech*. I've got old *Godakin* robots, they're a big inspiration as well.

**Gaijin!: Do you build mech models?**

Grant: I've built a couple of Gundam robots. I like the cute little Gundams. My brother has a couple of bigger ones.

**Gaijin!: Whose T-shirts do you like?**

Grant: Drunken Monkey stuff, especially the LEGO kungfu designs. Bathing ape has some good stuff too – I like the Baby Milo designs. I discovered this lable UXLab on my last visit to Sydney that I really liked. Hektik, Shwipe, some of the Designers Republic stuff. I got a Dave Kinsey tee last year that was really cool.

**Gaijin!: Where do you sell some of your designs?**

Grant: Anywhere! Independent shops, friends, family and anyone else I can con into wearing one of me dodgy tees!

**INFO:**

12 & 13. Deborah West 'untitled' + 'Tipping the scales' (back view) shown at *Do Not Tumble Dry* exhibition c/o BIN5Gallery@hotmail.com

14. Afrenasia 'identiware' (also available on a red T-shirt) \$35 [www.afrenasia.com/identiware](http://www.afrenasia.com/identiware)

15. Ken Lau 'Tree' shown at *Do Not Tumble Dry*

16. Quan 'X' shown at *Do Not Tumble Dry*

**Profile: Kathy Choi – Lotus Moon**  
kchoi777@hotmail.com

*Amy Griffiths fell in love with Kathy's designs at a local market in Sept 03. Here they talk about silk and handbags.*

**Gaijin!: What inspired Lotus Moon?**

Kathy: The name comes from my origin of Vietnamese and Korean parents. The Lotus is Vietnam's national flower, and as most Asian cultures follow the lunar calendar, that's where the moon comes in.

**Gaijin!: What were you doing before you became a designer?**

Kathy: I was a purchasing manager for a large company for nine years – and then in September 03 I decided I needed a break from the long hours and pressure of corporate life... So I took the terrifying leap and resigned. I wanted to let my head unwind and to take a good long look at life.

**Gaijin!: That's brave! So why fashion?**

Kathy: Well, after talking with friends I realised that among my passions there had always been the big three: gorgeous shoes, luscious hand bags and great clothes! So, I put my life where my mouth was and started designing (and hopefully selling) handbags.

**Gaijin!: What materials do you enjoy?**

Kathy: My handbags are all made from gorgeous raw silk in amazing colours and the intricate embroidery on all of them is hand sewn.

**Gaijin!: Where do you source the silk?**

Kathy: From my family in Vietnam, who get their silk from other relatives – I design the bags, and they make them all for me over there.

**Gaijin!: Favourite other designers?**

Kathy: Collette Dinnigan for her intricate detail; and Akira Isogawa because his designs are funky and quirky.

**Gaijin!: How many handbags does a girl really need to own?**

Kathy: You can never really have enough – one for every occasion!

**Gaijin!: Where can our readers find your handbags for sale?**

Kathy: Currently at weekend markets around Sydney and by mail order.

**INFO:**

17. Lotus Moon 'Eliza' in Peach/Purple \$44.95

18. Doc Martens Style 2B37, Black Latin leather \$179.95 – ph: 1800 655 154

19. Asics Onitsuka Tiger by Asics 'Mexico 66' \$179.90 – ph: (02) 9853 2300

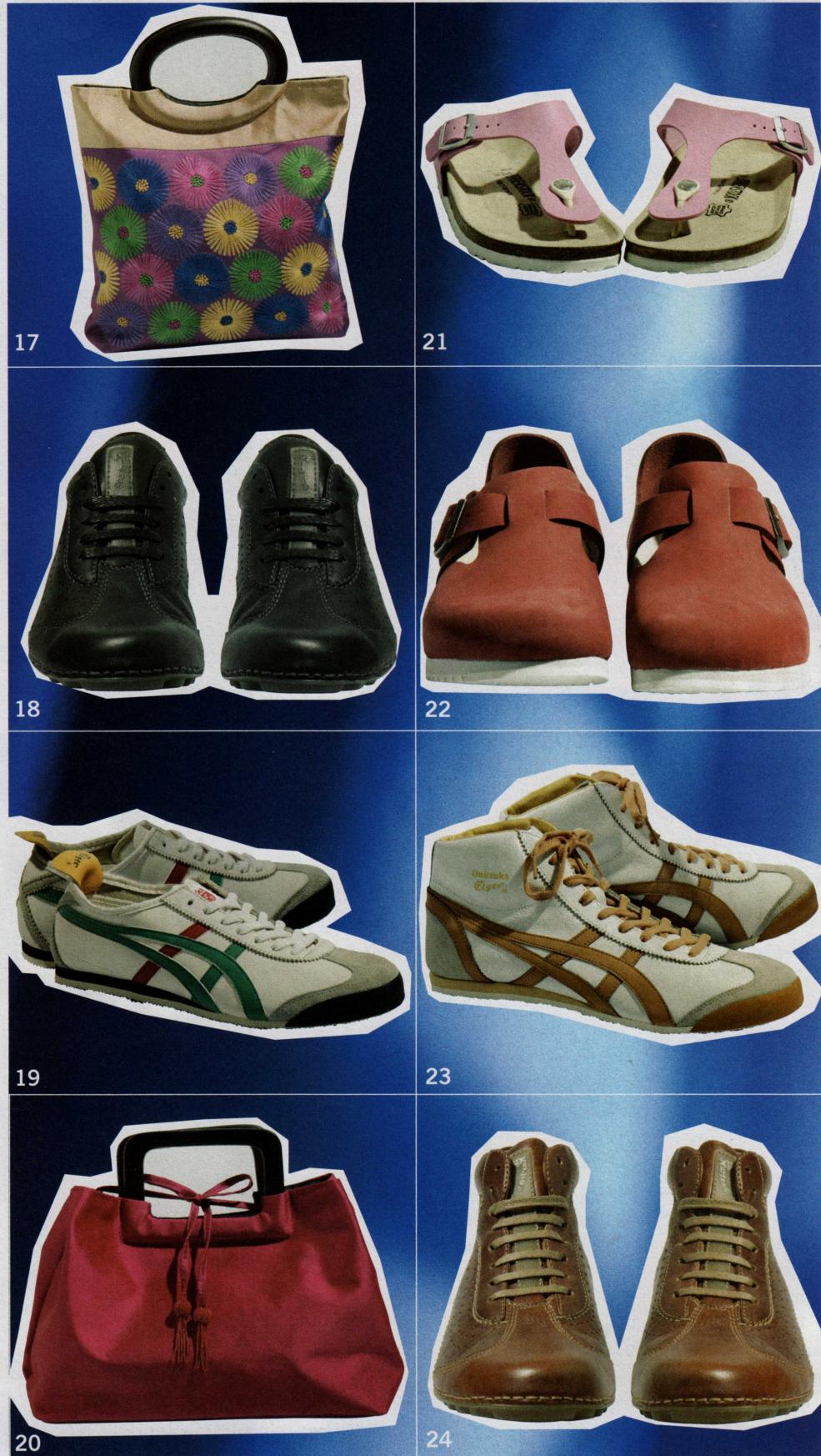
20. Lotus Moon 'Julia' in Fuschia Pink \$49.95

21. Birkenstock 'Gizeh' in pink with birko-floor, \$106 – www.birkenstock.com.au

22. Birkenstock 'London' in karmin with super grip sole \$249 – www.birkenstock.com.au

23. Asics Onitsuka Tiger by Asics 'Mexico mid runner' \$179.90 – ph: (02) 9853 2300

24. Doc Martens Style 2B36 Horny Outrageous leather \$189.95 – ph: 1800 655 154



## STREET FASHION



# ON JAPANESE GIRLS

Let's face it, when it comes to being shoe-horned into several stereotypes, young Japanese women have it the worst. Just as they are bound, at age 20, into elaborate kimonos for *seijin-shiki*, the coming-of-age ceremony held at city halls all over the country, they are also bound to the puerile fantasies not just of frustrated salarymen but of every horny *gaijin* that gets off the subway at Roppongi.

Submissive, white-faced geisha attentive to every whim, seductive hostess ready to trade her body for this season's Chanel, hypersexual schoolgirl in a mini-skirted sailor suit taunting the limits of legality, white-pantied OL (office lady) with an elaborate rope-binding fetish – these images overwhelm our perceptions, making it difficult to imagine Japanese women as anything else. It doesn't help that the women themselves are so willing to give life to these images, if only to filter the testosterone-attuned static at the edge of their society's frequency range. In the collective psyche of middle-aged Japanese men, women's roles can be summarised pretty much as they were at the end of the Edo period in the mid-19th century – wife, servant, geisha, or *baishun-fu* (prostitute).

Each new generation is noticeably stronger and more strident than their male peers, but they are still ensnared by traditional expectations. Obsessed with the hourly advance of their ages, despite the durable smoothness of their skin, the greatest fear of Japanese women is finding themselves unmarried and still living with their parents at age 30.

The new Japanese woman is complex and intriguingly neurotic, but she is neither coy nor unavailable. Until she finds a promising relationship (and even, sometimes, when she does), her sexuality is given plenty of rein, unfettered by prurient Western notions of what constitutes a 'respectable' number of partners. If statistics are anything to go by, even as a teenager, she might not be averse to what is referred



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**MADMAN.**  
ENTERTAINMENT



**Gaijin!**  
AUSTRALASIAN SUB CULT MAGAZINE  
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to as *enjo kosai* or 'compensated interaction' with older Japanese men.

It's that sexuality, so overt in urban street fashion, and unexpectedly predatory and wild in big city clubs and bars, that has inspired an imaginative revolution. The otaku objectification of the new Japanese woman has nothing in common with the compliant 20th century stereotypes that preoccupy the salariman. The female character of a contemporary manga or video game is not a fawning, doe-eyed woman-child that some paedophilic old loser dreams of impaling on his metaphorical sword – the girl wields a sword of her own.

And on the street, in real life, she can be every bit as sexy, teched-out and confident as her game-bound avatar.

Unafraid of showing skin, or confronting the breathy libido of passers-by, her clothes defy gravity as they cling to every inch of her slender body, unsupported by her small breasts or her non-existent butt. The look is rendered, like the surface of a wire-frame construct. No combination of colours is too extreme.

Still it's hard to get past her notorious materialism: it's compelled less by a real interest in the perceived status or value of the up-market brands she acquires than by a shallowness so innate and profound that shopping has replaced even the popular arts at the centre of Japan's 21st century urban culture. To the new Japanese woman, shopping is a performance art, with rituals as intricate as a tea ceremony. It is probably more satisfying than sex.

The new Japanese woman's mindlessness is disconcerting in an indefinable way. There is something Zen-like about it, something above consciousness. And maybe that's what imbues her with such unarguable cool.

Creed O'Hanlon

## LOOKING FOR A JAPANESE GIRLFRIEND?

**10 T-shirt twin packs worth \$40 each from the famous J-List collection to be won!**

**[www.jlist.com](http://www.jlist.com)**

Will a 'Looking for a Japanese Girlfriend' T-shirt from the world famous J-List make you powerfully more attractive to gorgeous Japanese women? Maybe.

Send us your favourite Japanese greeting (1-10 words) and we'll select 10 winners who will find out for themselves!

PLUS, the wonderful people at J-List will also give each winner a 'Baka Gaijin' ('stupid foreigner') baby doll girls' T, so that in the event a J-Girl falls for you, she'll have something nice to wear too.

**Entries close Monday 22 March 2004.**

### HOW TO ENTER:

- (1) Research your favourite Japanese greeting. Write/type it down.
- (2) Send the greeting, along with your name and postal address, via email: to [win@gaijinmag.com](mailto:win@gaijinmag.com) / or post: Gaijin! J-List t-shirt Promotion, PO Box 2286, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.
- (3) Visit our website [www.gaijinmag.com](http://www.gaijinmag.com) for full competition details, including terms and conditions.

**Remember: entries close on Monday 22 March 2004.**



# READERS GET STUCK IN

We dig rants about Asian sub cultures – and it's clear you do too. Is this the start of a passionate relationship? Or do you only send love letters because we offer bribes?

## Less anime, more music, books, art, bribes & a forum

I have one thing to ask: please don't let *Gaijin!* become dominated by anime and fanboy gushings. I like the music, books and art reviews – these are things that I (and others) have only a passing knowledge about and the mag could serve as a great springboard into Asian pop culture. Of course anime is an important part, probably the number one way we all became interested in things Asian, but it's not the be all and end all.

The second thing I ask (sorry, did I say one thing?) is to get some forum action going on the website. A community is definitely what this magazine is about.

Anyway, I am not averse to having my opinion bought with consumer goods... or money ... illegal fireworks, they're good ... oh yeah, women, did I mention women, because women are nice, the way they are all soft with the bits... where was I?

Matt French

Damn Matt, way to go and start a fight with half our readers! But you're right – we will do our best to cover a wider range of pop/sub culture areas. We'll get back to you on the forum idea... BTW, you've won a Limited Edition *Gaijin!* T-shirt!



## Don't listen to Matt, I love anime!

How about an article/interview on Studio Ghibli / Hayao Miyazaki?

Dewa, mata!

Peter Lees

Yes mate. We'll work on it... Hail!

## Dodgy dubs of Asian movies

The first time I saw *Drunken Master 2*, I was blown away. I loved the movie. I was tempted to get it on video. But then I thought it would eventually come to DVD for our region.

I didn't expect to get results but I found it on an Aussie DVD site. Having a look at the features, what do I see? Languages: English. Huh?

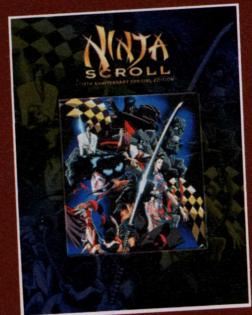
I don't want the dodgy dubbed version. I want an option to have it in Chinese and subtitles. I want to be able to choose. I had my credit card out ready to purchase when I saw it was available in Australia. Now I've decided not to purchase the movie.

I hope future releases will at least have an option for the original audio with subtitles.

Anyone else feel the same way?

Morris Umali

Word. Does anyone like dodgy dubs?  
Not us mate.  
BTW, you've scored the Ninja Scroll 10th Anniversary Edition DVD!



## Don't bag the USA!

The comments by CC O'Hanlon, and your praise of his 'rant' in V.01 were a little off-kilter.

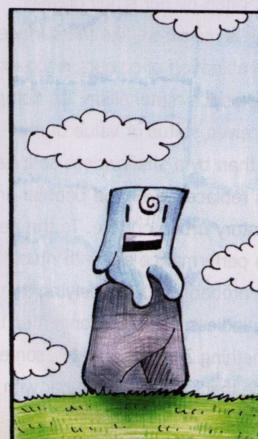
I am American, and spent most of my life in the agricultural wasteland of the central States.

But, even in the middle of nowhere, my mother had a Bonsai shop, I only drove Japanese cars, most of my friends have been Asian in origin, I laughed at the thought of buying non-Japanese electronics and I have even worked for one of the US anime companies.

I agree with Keith Boesky, it is not so much of a change in the influential tide from West to East (or vice versa) as you might think. The ways of our grandparents are fading away, and younger, more 'open' views are falling into place. It is not a conflicting change of 'power,' but as Mr O'Hanlon states, 'a perceptual shift.' There is nothing here (in the West) now that wasn't there 20 years ago, it has just been 'accepted'.

How much of the Asian pop-culture that you (and I) love comes to Australia via the West? Australia is a small market, and there is no reason for local businesses to deal with anything that they haven't seen to be profitable elsewhere. Most of this (anime/video, comics and Asian-esque music) comes from the larger Western markets, much of it from America.

Obviously, if I were keen on my own society I wouldn't be in Oz studying Asia. Australia has a unique 'Western' perspective of the whole of Asia and has the potential to lead the way to a more unified world. But, as of now, until Australia becomes aggressively intertwined economically and politically with its 'near north,' the West will



**WIN! Random prizes!**

Send us your rants / questions about favourite films, books, comics, personalities, toys / fashion tips / monkey pictures / haiku and whatever else you want to share with other readers. You can do it via email: [editor@gaijinmag.com](mailto:editor@gaijinmag.com)

OR post: **Editor, Gaijin! Magazine, PO Box 2286 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.**

Best letters to reach us before Friday 19 March will win... something good. And at least one reader gets a T-shirt ^\_^

remain our best source for Asian culture. Regardless where the Asian culture comes from, that should not change your goals of 'fair go' and cross-cultural understanding through education and experience.

As Mr O'Hanlon concludes in his letter, 'What we don't have yet is enough creative interaction with Asia,' and it is this that you really should seek to change with this publication.

P.S. In a world where the future depends on the understanding of a more multi-cultural society, there are times when you wonder if it really is such a good idea... Take *t.A.T.U Paragate* (info: [www.tatu-paragate.jp](http://www.tatu-paragate.jp)), a full length anime feature due November, voiced by the Russian alleged lesbian pop stars, with opening direction from Shinichiro Watanabe (*Cowboy Bebop*, *Vision of Escaflowne*) – not exactly the ultimate culmination of East meets West I had in mind.

**Matt Tarpley**

Points taken Matt. There IS a heavy reliance on big US businesses to feed our many pop/sub cultures... and some people don't like it. I'm guessing you yourself don't always agree with bigger = better! BTW: for showing us your serious AND kinky sides... you've won a big box set *Neon Genesis Evangelion Movie Collection* reviewed this issue!

DESPITE THE CONCEPT OF "ASIA" BEING A WESTERN INVENTION, APPARENTLY IT'S SOMEHOW "INVADING" HOLLYWOOD, AS EVIDENCED BY THE SUCCESS OF "THE LAST STARFIGHTER", STARRING FAMOUS JAPANESE ACTOR, MR. TOM CRUISE. TOM-SAN, WELCOME.

**...But don't use the US customary measurement!**

One small gripe: in the toy news section, the height and wingspan for Bahamut is described in inches. I was disappointed to see that your publication had favoured the use of United States Customary Measurement instead of the metric system. As an Australian publication, I'd expected that you would have used metric measures, since it is the standard form of measurement in this country (and Japan and most parts of the world).

I would like to kinda request that you be more vigilant in future issues and ensure that all measures are quoted as metric.

**Himura Kenshin**

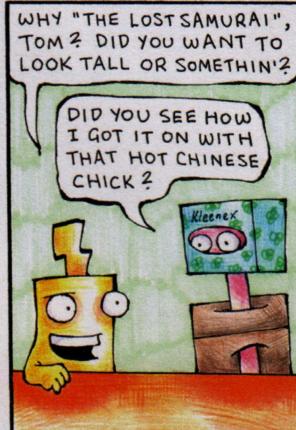
Ahh... OK. But most people are used to quoting measurements for toys and a few of our other favourite things (such as vinyl records) in inches. You're right. It's tedious.

**A reader recommends further reading**

If you're into the whole Western assimilation stuff, here's some summer reading for you. Two of my favourite Asian books are *Memoirs of a Geisha* by Arthur Golden, which talks of a young love story through the eyes of a Japanese woman, and *Mao's Last Dancer* by Cun Li Xin, which is an autobiography about a farmer boy's son in the countryside of China who grows up to become a star. Both books are very empathetic and engage the audience through their cultural interests and success stories.

**Amanda Lim**

Thanks Amanda! Half the people working here have read and raved about *Memoirs of a Geisha*, but a few of us are only just starting on it. Looking forward to *Mao's Last Dancer* too. BTW: for making our summer reading so much better, you've won *WXIII Patlabor: The Movie 3* DVD reviewed this issue!

**Got rice? No you don't!**

I recently bought the first Australian edition of *Gaijin!* and enjoyed it. However, it distinctly says on the cover that ANIME + ROBOTS + MUSIC + FASHION + FILM + RICE are featured in the magazine.

I'm a huge fan of all of the above, so I was really looking forward to reading articles about ALL OF THE ABOVE.

However, I swear, maybe I overlooked something, BUT there were no articles regarding RICE – whatsoever. For shame! Misleading poor peons astray, you should print some articles about rice for me in the next issues, and more about Asian food in general, because you KNOW we love it. Your job as the editor should be to ensure we as the reader are not deceived by false offerings from the heathens. Also, I was wondering, as you had letters and competitions featured in your first issue, were they from the online zine or your international issues? I noticed one of the entries that was published in the Final Fantasy competition was actually from one of the guys I went to TAFE with... is there an online gallery where we can see some more of the entries? Otherwise, keep up the good work, and stop sleeping it only takes time away from good work. That is all, carry on...

**Jaro S**

Well Jaro, there was one quote from Lucy Liu that mentioned how eating rice is universal in Asian cultures... (and that's kind of why RICE is on the cover) but yeah, that's not really enough. Where's the rice in this issue? BTW, *Gaijin!* is 100 percent Australian made and owned. No international versions... yet. All entries and letters for first issue came from our website [www.gaijinmag.com](http://www.gaijinmag.com) and that's where you find our galleries of fan art.

**Thanks to Madman Entertainment  
[www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au) for the bonus DVDs to give away on these pages!**

# BONDI TSUNAMI

***'It's a psychedelic bastard of a movie'***

A demented cross between *Big Wednesday*, *Two Lane Blacktop* and *Wild Zero!*, *Bondi Tsunami* follows a super cool group of four Japanese surfers as they travel the East Coast of Australia searching for the ultimate wave. Directed by Rachael Lucas and produced by her brother-in-law, Anthony Lucas Smith, the filmmakers use a wild array of visual references from Japanese media in this stunning road trip.

From samurai to Nintendo, giant prawns to beetroot in hamburgers, the surfer's reactions to the cultural differences are used to great comedic effect, how does the director feel she has captured the

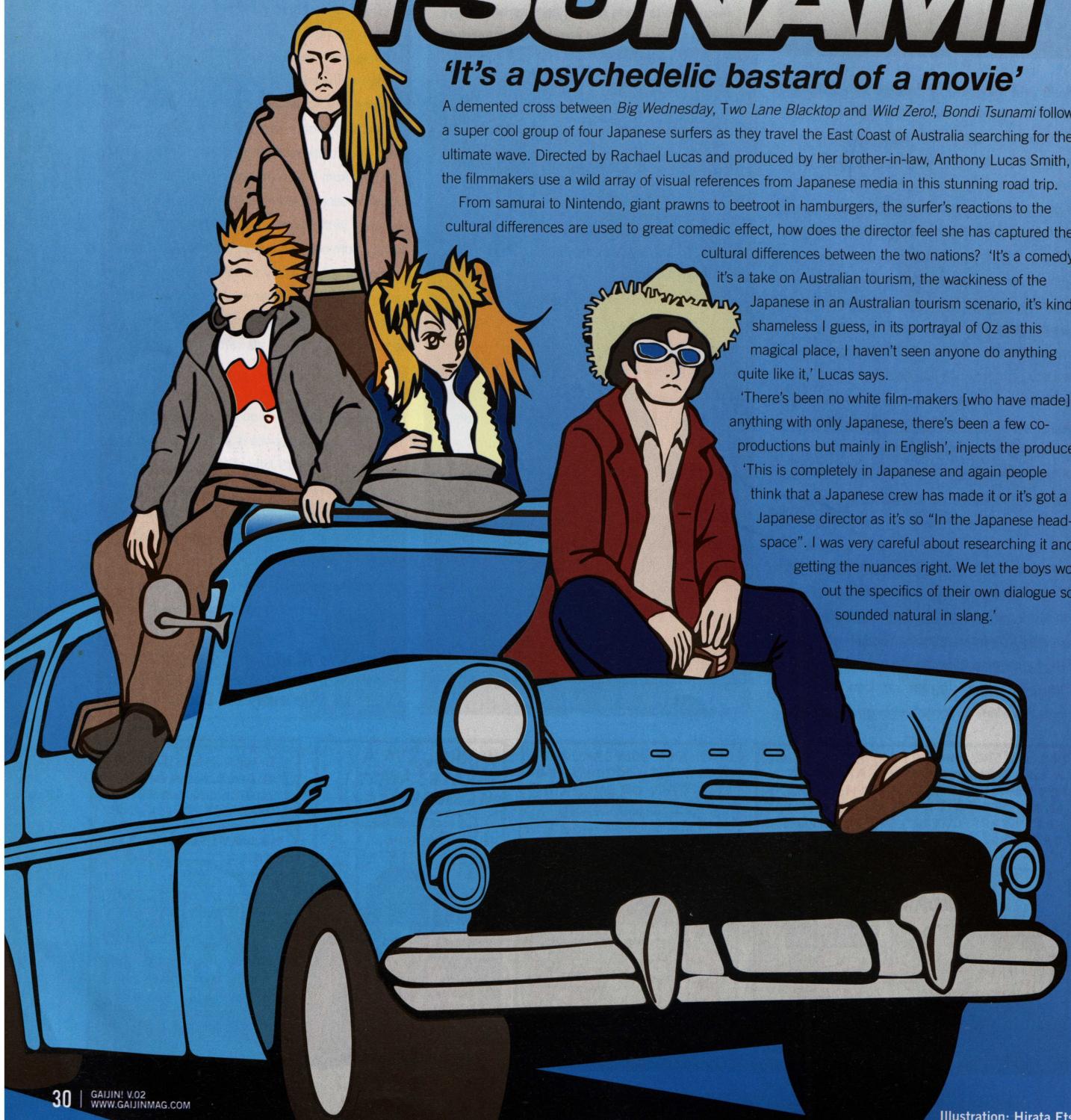
cultural differences between the two nations? 'It's a comedy;

it's a take on Australian tourism, the wackiness of the

Japanese in an Australian tourism scenario, it's kind of shameless I guess, in its portrayal of Oz as this magical place, I haven't seen anyone do anything quite like it,' Lucas says.

'There's been no white film-makers [who have made] anything with only Japanese, there's been a few co-productions but mainly in English', injects the producer.

'This is completely in Japanese and again people think that a Japanese crew has made it or it's got a Japanese director as it's so "In the Japanese head-space". I was very careful about researching it and getting the nuances right. We let the boys work out the specifics of their own dialogue so it sounded natural in slang.'





## Bondi Banzai! The gameshow/MTV cross-over

The four characters are clearly defined, each with a definitive persona that depicts a clear aspect of Japanese society. 'They are very symbolic of the Japanese today – commitment-free, no obligations, avoiding the salary from generation *Me*. This is the instant noodle, McDonald's generation. 'You avoid responsibility,' continues Lucas. 'The four travel around Australia, they are *The Wizard of Oz* team ...a cross between *Kabuki*, *Monkey Magic*, Japanese game shows and MTV. We were also very inspired by Japanese Karaoke music videos and the sentimentalism in them so there is a scene which is a pastiche on that.'

Why does Lucas think the Japanese look towards the West for stylistic inspiration? 'The Japanese would love to be portrayed as the cowboy, the enigmatic, confident man – which doesn't happen in Western cinema and doesn't happen in Japanese cinema either. They have the Yakuza but that's about it. The characters are all very iconic, like movie stars, and one of the advantages of being a female director is that I get to perve on the guys, because focusing on the cinematography you have to stare at their beauty and try to bring it out in every shot to make them look like gods. I had such a good time filming the guys as they are just as much the beauty objects of the movie.' This testosterone is countered by the gorgeous-looking Miki Sasaki, playing Kimiko. 'Her character is very interested in the devil woman and the different archetypes of Japanese women. Kimiko is like a modern version of all these things.'

The surfers had never performed in front of the camera, and their awestruck reactions to the Australian landscapes were real. These untrained actors and the improvised nature of the script



### AUTHOR: DAVID BROWN

David Michael Brown has recently relocated to Sydney from his hometown of London. He has contributed to many of the UK's finest film publications including *Film Review*, *Shivers* and *Ultimate DVD*.

affected the film's thematic journey more than the filmmakers imagined. 'We just literally got in the car and we drove, if I saw a sugar cane field on the side of the road that looked cute, we'd say let's stop and do it here. We'd just go out there and shoot it like a fashion shoot. We were looking for the visuals all the time. I was very interested in anything iconically Australian. Particularly with the car surfing scenes, if we came across a windmill I'd say "we gotta surf past that!"'

### Have credit card, will film

Did the pair find it difficult raising the funds to make the film? Japanese surfers and giant guitars don't leap out as blockbuster material... 'No funding! We've got maxed out credit cards and bank loans!' exclaims Lucas Smith. 'No one has given us a cent!' The film's title can't have helped, where did it come from? 'I lived in Japan for five years, came back to Bondi and found these Japanese were surfing, but all segregating themselves, so I started this radio show called *The Bondi Tsunami Surf Show* to bring them all together. I'd speak in Japanese and English [and] give surf reports to help them blend into the Aussie surf culture.'

But will the audience have to be surfers to enjoy the delights of *Bondi Tsunami*? Lucas Smith thinks not. 'This is not a surfing movie as much as it is a road movie. A surfing movie could make you bored easily but this is a road movie that has surfing in it. In Japan they will probably bill it as the Australian-Japanese 'Road Trip', that is a better advertising way as people might not want to see it because they are not a surfer. But a surf movie just has waves and waves and even surfers fall asleep, and this film is certainly not that.'



### Meet the cast

**Commentary by Rachael Lucas, Director**

#### Kimiko (Miki Sasaki)

'Kimiko was based on a Tokyo schoolgirl who has never quite grown out of being cute. She is as cunning as she is sweet but has one hell of an agenda. Her mission in the movie was like Yoko Ono's was to break up The Beatles, she wants to break up the friends and be the centre of attention.'

#### Shark (Takehiro Abe)

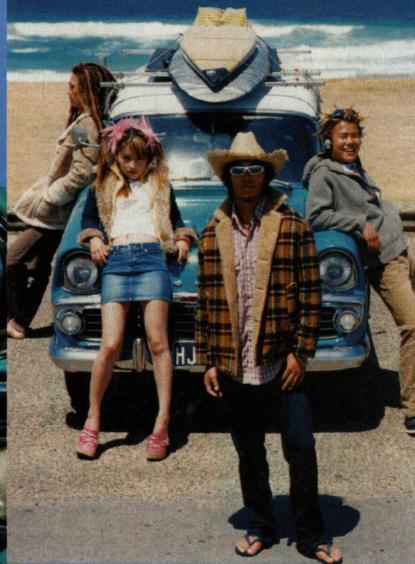
'With Shark I wanted the Clint Eastwood type, the samurai, a stoic angry leader. The whole idea about him was to make this living magazine model, a Japanese icon.'

#### Yuto (Keita Abe)

'Yuto is like the Nintendo generation brat. He is very much the gadget crazed amusement boy who constantly needs entertainment. Very hypo, he is the child of the movie.'

#### Ganga Man (Nobuhisa Ikeda)

'Ganga Man is the most interesting of all the characters as he is a spirit. He is like a Japanese Bob Marley and comes from Nimbin which is famous for dealing pot. Like a ghost and an indigenous character, he is in tune with the land and can make clouds move and spooky things happen. He has magical powers.'





## Good (bass) Vibrations: **Gaijin!**

**Gaijin!** : What kind of music do you like to play?

**Pandit G:** All sorts. We've been trying to push a lot of Bhangra for many years, ragga and drum n bass. The jungle / drum n bass thing kick-started people like ourselves, Osmani sounds, Badmarsh and Shri. A lot of people use hip-hop or reggae but it was very much the drum n bass thing that got us going.

**Gaijin!** : So it's a uniquely English thing.

**Pandit G:** Everyone was into it, no matter what background. I had a reggae background for 25 years. You had all that in there: the soul, the funk, and more and more there are different

influences, like the Brazilian stuff now.

Drum n bass is the first indigenous music to come out of the dance music scene in the UK since the late '80s and of course the record companies didn't know what the bloody hell to do with it. We took it somewhere else... we were using drum n bass but played live bass, live guitar and [were] putting tabla on it and people were saying 'You can't do that!' You can do what the fuck you want really. . .

**Gaijin!** : That's the whole aesthetic behind drum n bass.

**Pandit G:** It was the punk of the dance music. . .

'Drum n bass is the first indigenous music to come out of the dance music scene in the UK since the late '80s, and of course, the record companies didn't know what to do with it.' – Pandit G

Photography: Tim Levy

## Asian Dub Foundation interviews

ADF toured for Good Vibrations and La Haine shows this summer. Here Ritual talks music with Pandit G, while Terry Kerns gets political with Dr Das.

**Gaijin!**: I'd better not talk to you too much about drum n bass... .

**Pandit G**: Well, yeah you can – ha ha ha!

I love to talk about music. A lot of the time we get: 'Oh, so you're very political aren't you.' Well what the fuck do they mean?

**Gaijin!**: I'll ask you some questions more like that later. . .

**Pandit G**: AAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

**Gaijin!**: OK. Did you choose music or did music choose you?

**Pandit G**: Music chose me I think. I was involved with doing a lot of anti-racist civil

rights work and through this organisation called Community Music I got involved with musicians teaching people how to use music technology. That's how I met Dr Das the bass player (back in '93).

I didn't do music full time until about six or seven years ago. Most bands (particularly in the UK) don't have the opportunity to work with an organisation that encourages you to develop yourself and make your own music. It was something that we used to our full advantage. It was very hard at the time, because Brit pop was very much the order of the day and we didn't seem to fit in to any categories... so we just decided we'd fuck off to somewhere and went

to France, [then] all over Europe and we haven't stopped going – and now we're in Australia.

**Gaijin!**: I think that base is important – people need a springboard!

**Pandit G**: I think so. It's very much about lending resources and borrowing the expertise of people – it just gives you self-confidence. Even though we're on a major label we're still pretty independent; we can do all our own campaign work [and] we've got our own education project ADFED ([www.adfed.co.uk](http://www.adfed.co.uk)) in East London 'cos that's where we started from.

We'd be going out on the weekend, going to play concerts and during the week we'd



**'Our lyrics are simply a reflection of what we happen to be talking about, all right? We don't ask "Oh, what political subject can we talk about today?"' – Dr Das**

be involved very much in teaching. It's empowerment (innit). Music technology gives you an opportunity to make your own music and develop yourself.

Unfortunately we come from a world where people think it's more like Pop Idol... where you just get discovered; or something where someone writes all your songs, shows you how to dance and gives you a diet! It's not like that, the real thing is you've got to really look within yourself to make some good music, to say something... and that's why when we were talking about drum n bass it does have a particular relevance in how it just encouraged people saying 'That's my mate making that tune, put it out on white label, why the fuck can't I do that...' Just do it for the love of it, for the love of music...

**Gaijin!** : East West fusion – does it give people a voice they may not have once had?

**Pandit G:** It may do, certainly with the Bhangra thing. We'd been playing 'that' Panjabi MC tune for four or five years when the album

came out. I remember playing it in Auckland to a mostly Maori crowd and people absolutely went wild for it.

It's more about getting this music out to people. Even though Bhangra has been going 25 years, in the UK they would say people won't like it 'cos it's sung in Punjabi. Of course people would like it – you just give them a lead in and people investigate.

Now you have people like Madonna getting into it but sometimes it gets exotic-ised and that's the worry in the UK. It's just modern urban music. It's no different from reggae or RnB. It came from mixing Punjabi folk music from festivals and just plugging in electric guitars and keyboards. Now people are making Bhangra music from across the world – from Canada, America and across to Japan. For a wider audience it makes them realise there is a wider music scene out there, it's not all MTV. There's something a bit bigger than that and that's what you want to encourage – it's about people, wherever they are, can make music.

## Music appreciation 101: ADF recommends...

### New sounds

**Pandit G:** There's a new breakbeat / drum n bass on Siraj Records; lots of new releases for Bollywood Breaks; and loads of Bhangra out of the States.

**Dr Das:** The Bug in the UK, doing distortion ragga, or bashman kinda stuff that is really hardcore; and Visionary Underground producing sort of Indian / Asian inflected break beat stuff.

### Classics

**Dr Das:** We're seriously influenced by dub music, so: Lee Perry; King Tubby; and Adrian Sherwood (of course) is a massive influence. The individuals in the band have different influences, from jazz – Miles Davis – through to Indian music – Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

## Dr Das on ADF's approach to global music... and politics.

**Gaijin!** : How is Asian Dub Foundation perceived in Britain nowadays?

**Dr Das:** Ten years on people *know* about us, but we aren't talked about. We just supported probably the highest profile band in the world at the moment, Radiohead, but practically nothing was written about us. That's how Britain is at the moment – it's very backward musically...

**Gaijin!** : The lyrics of *Fortress Europe* describe the worldwide phenomenon of private enterprise policing, which America (and also European countries) seems to be not only suffering internally, but also enforcing on a global scale.

**Dr Das:** We've seen adverse attitudes towards immigrants and asylum seekers from the year dot, but it's a lot worse under globalisation. It isn't about people – it's about money. And one of its bases is the way you can get free or cheap labour in certain places. Why *shouldn't* those people go to another country where they can be paid 10 times as much?

**Gaijin!** : Despite covering topics that are thought provoking and somewhat depressing, you maintain a positive outlook throughout your music. Is it hard to balance such seemingly polar musical and lyrical emotion?

**Dr Das:** Not at all. Our lyrics are simply a reflection of what we happen to be talking about, all right? We don't ask 'Oh, what political subject can we talk about today?'

If we're talking about the world, we just scribble down ideas as they happen. The music is always militant, uplifting – it's got to be cutting edge. I think people sometimes forget that we are actually musicians – we just happen to be musicians who express our thoughts as members of society through the music as well. The majority of musicians self-censor for the music business, and the pop industry in particular deems certain subject matters inappropriate. We said, 'Well, why can't someone talk about whatever they want to talk about?' We haven't got a problem with love songs or boy-girl, girl-girl, boy-boy or whatever relationships – so why do those sorts of people have a problem with us expressing other things that are going on?

**More info:** [www.asiandubfoundation.com](http://www.asiandubfoundation.com)

– Terry Kerns is a Brisbane-based graphic artist and long-time ADF fan.



### RITUAL

Ritual (aka Lefroy Verghese) spins drum n bass and other broken beats at parties all over the East Coast, as well as dealing good music at The Record Store [www.therecordstore.com.au](http://www.therecordstore.com.au).

Thanks to EMI and all involved in the Good Vibrations Festival  
more info [www.jammusic.com.au/goodvibrationsfestival](http://www.jammusic.com.au/goodvibrationsfestival)





AUTHOR: TIM DEAN

Tim has been into anime since Astro Boy hit the ABC. These days he spends most of his time in GERWALK mode.

# HISTORY OF MECHA

From superheroes to walking tanks to angels, Tim Dean traces lumbering steps of the giant metal creations we all know and love.

## Introduction: Why mecha?

Big eyes, coloured hair, sailor uniforms, giant robots – all dead giveaways that you're watching anime. While the first three are stylistic features, the last is different – giant robots, or mecha, are more than just thematic devices, they form a central role in story telling.

So why is it that mecha are such a perennial theme in Japanese animation?

Anime was born in the years after the Second World War, and it was in this environment and culture that the themes of anime, and mecha, took root. Technology, and its potential use for the benefit or to the detriment of humanity, was a concept that weighed heavily on the Japanese cultural consciousness after WWII. The country had seen an unprecedented adoption of technology and industrialisation in the half century leading up to the war. This society had seen the impact that such rampant technologism could have when the culture didn't have time to catch up – and it had also seen first-hand the devastating effect of technology on people in the form of the atomic bomb. Yet the Japanese were also enamoured with technology, and all it had to offer, and continued to embrace it at an ever-increasing rate.

This also lead to a questioning of where technology would take humanity in the future – a questioning that manifested readily in the imaginations of animators and story tellers. The future – often preceded by some kind of apocalypse – was the ideal setting for reflecting on human folly and the impact of technology. As Japan was currently rebuilding from the devastation of the war, and the trauma of the atomic bombs, there was a clear parallel in this post-apocalyptic vision.

Compare this with the Western view of the future in science fiction like the optimistic *Star Trek*, or even earlier, the contemplative, but very human stories of Arthur C Clarke or Isaac Asimov.

Which brings us to the first generation of mecha.

## Early mecha: Giant metal superheros

As the themes of technology, the future and the role of humanity were explored in the 1950s, Japanese animators turned to US popular culture and were influenced by the likes of DC and Marvel comics. Here you had a clear distinction between good and evil, where the protagonist had a clear mission to oppose the evil villains in their quest to dominate/enslave/destroy the world.

While in the 1950s American national pride was riding high, resulting in heroes representing (and looking like) America, the opposite was the case in Japan. The Japanese were still reeling from their defeat in the war, and were



### EARLY DAYS

Tetsuwan Atomu  
(Astro Boy) (1963)

Tetsujin 28 Go  
(1963)

Mazinger-Z  
(1972)

Voltron  
(1982)

Giant Robo  
(1992)



### MIDDLE DAYS

Mobile Suit Gundam  
(1979)



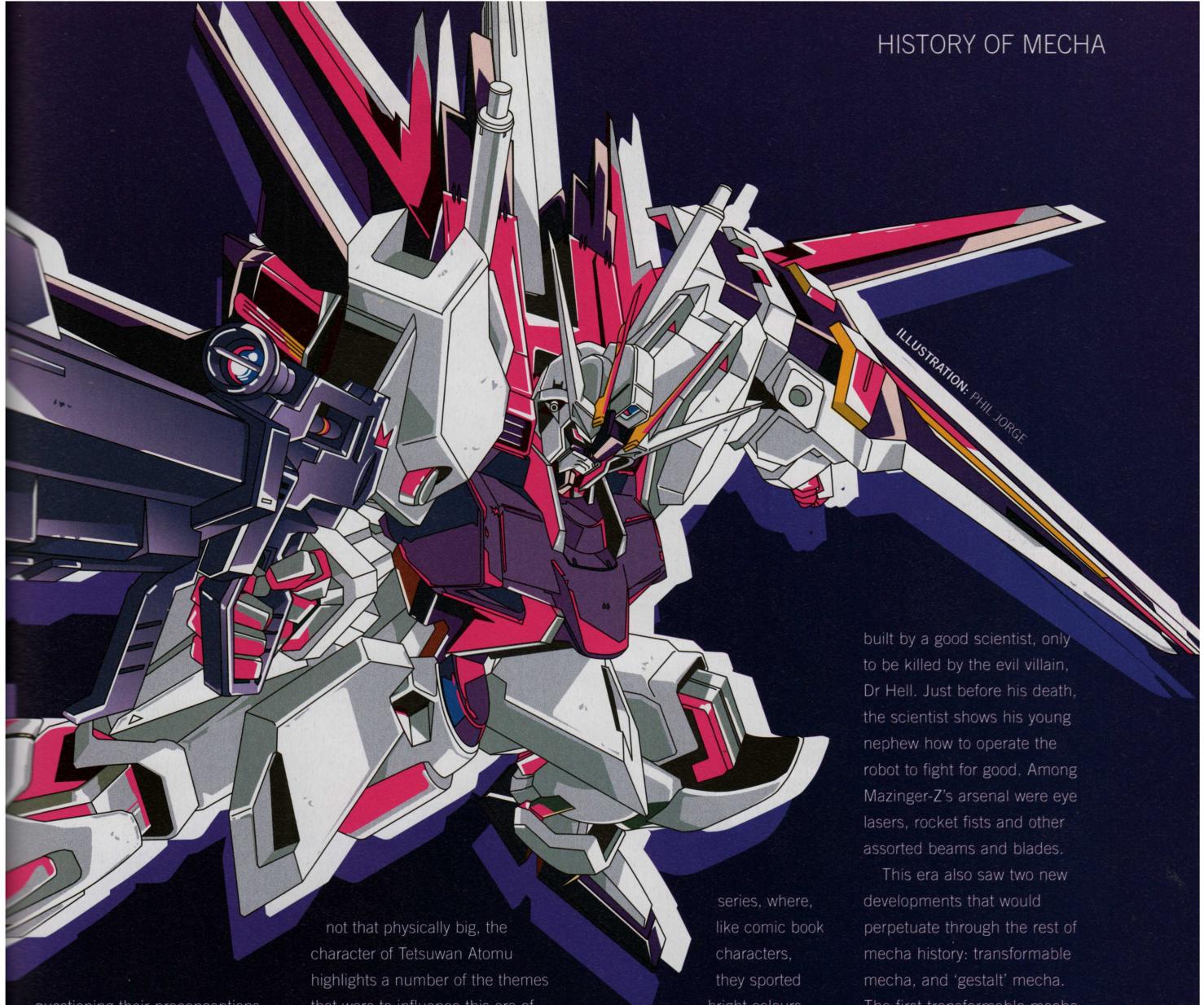


ILLUSTRATION: PHIL JORGE

questioning their preconceptions about the role their country was to have in the world. As a result, they had a more cynical view of the hero: instead of being based on nationalism, the hero was based on pure and simple 'goodness'.

So while the American comic books turned to super-humans, the Japanese turned to super-machines. One of the first, and arguably one of the most influential anime series of all time, was Osamu Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atomu* – known as *Astro Boy* in the West. While he's

not that physically big, the character of *Tetsuwan Atomu* highlights a number of the themes that were to influence this era of mecha. He was created by a good scientist, and imbued with the human spirit of the scientist's son. He fought villains and evil wherever they occurred – all while trying to live his life like a normal boy.

The theme of the childhood hero is also central to *Tetsuwan Atomu*. The child represents innocence, purity and goodness, and almost all mecha series to come would feature a child or youth as a hero at some point.

Following on from *Tetsuwan Atomu* was a run of giant robot

series, where, like comic book characters, they sported bright colours, extraordinary powers and many had catch phrases that were shouted by their controllers. One of the first of these was *Tetsujin 28 Go*, first aired in 1963 in Japan, and known as *Gigantor* over here. In the series, a young boy commands the mighty automaton, *Tetsujin 28 Go*, using his remote control, and fights crime and evil around the world. Another series is *Mazinger-Z* (1972), known as *Tranzor Z* in the West, which follows a similar theme, with *Mazinger-Z* being

built by a good scientist, only to be killed by the evil villain, Dr Hell. Just before his death, the scientist shows his young nephew how to operate the robot to fight for good. Among *Mazinger-Z*'s arsenal were eye lasers, rocket fists and other assorted beams and blades.

This era also saw two new developments that would perpetuate through the rest of mecha history: transformable mecha, and 'gestalt' mecha. The first transformable mecha show was *Getter Robo* from 1975, which would then pave the way for the likes of the *Transformers*, as well as the next generation's *Macross* and many other series.

A late arrival to this genre was the two *Voltron* series – from 1982 and '83 – both of which appeared in the West. Both popularised the notion of individual mecha that joined together to form a greater, giant robot, sometimes called a 'gestalt' robot, after the psychological term referring to the whole being more than the sum of its parts.

**Fang of the Sun**  
**Dougram** (1981)



**Super Dimension Fortress Macross** (1982)



**Votoms**  
(1983)



**Mobile Suite Zeta**  
**Gundam** (1985)



**Appleseed**  
(1985)



**Bubblegum Crisis**  
(1987)





The early era of mecha also has strong parallels with the samurai tradition, especially when it comes to the styles of fighting and the types of weapons being used. It would not be unusual to see these giant robots, loaded with guns, energy weapons and rockets as they were, to begin hurling *shruiken* and swinging great swords at their foes.

### The next generation: Military mecha

The first series to really change the direction of mecha was the immensely popular *Mobile Suit Gundam*, released in 1979. Unlike the previous generation, the mecha in *Gundam* were mass produced vehicles, driven into war by human pilots. So, unlike the simplistic themes of the early generation of mecha, *Gundam* brought all the complex themes and ambiguous morality of war to anime. In terms of timing, this may be in part a reaction to the world climate in the late seventies in the aftermath of the war in Vietnam, and continuing tensions of the Cold War.

Like the early generation, the world was usually set in the future after some kind of apocalyptic event, and humankind was still struggling to overcome the very issues that already brought it to the brink of destruction – while a small band of everyday people or soldiers are thrust into the midst of combat, and have to strive to bring order and meaning to a world drenched in conflict. In this way, the ordinary, and generally portrayed as innocent, protagonist uses personal moral values, as well

as instinct, to survive. They'll eventually succeed in becoming a hero, albeit usually a reluctant one – fairly typical war drama kind of stuff, really.

Primarily, the distinction is where the early generation of mecha anime had clear values of good and evil, the military era is more ambiguous, with the protagonists relying on their own values to paint the world as good and evil – often with mixed success, and, of course, the resulting angst.

The mecha designs also differ markedly from the earlier giant robots. The mecha now have a more utilitarian and military look, with more 'conventional' weapons, such as rifles and bazookas, although there are still plenty of hand-to-hand weapons like the Zaku's Heat Axe and the RX-78's beam sabre in *Gundam*. You can still see some leftovers from the superhero era in the first *Gundam* series, though, with the bright colours, although these rapidly fade to more subdued greys, greens and blues in subsequent series. But in all of the series, there is usually a few bright coloured mecha. Interestingly, there are also numerous references, in design, to the Second World War, especially allusions to the Nazi war machine, whether it is in the head design of the Zaku – resembling a German helmet – or the usage of the hand-held Panzfaust anti-tank weapon.

The world of *Gundam* sees a civil war erupt between Earth and its space colonies, which declare independence as the Archduchy of Zion (renamed to Zeon in the Western series, supposedly to avoid reference to the Zionist movement). Once again, it's a young civilian

who becomes the champion pilot of the super-powerful prototype Gundam mobile suit, and goes on

to turn the tide in the war. *Gundam* also has a mystical element, with the New Type pilots, who had slight supernatural powers, and ultimately became the best pilots.

*Gundam* is also interesting in that a significant amount of work went into justifying the existence of the giant mobile suits through science. This was one of the first attempts to make giant robots a sensible development, and further differentiates it from the superhero era.

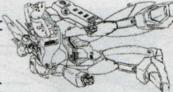
The enemy in these mecha series weren't always human, though, and there are a number of series where the theme is broadened to include the cultural differences between humans and aliens, such as in *Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (1982) – where the alien culture of the Zentraedi comes into conflict with that of human culture, and eventually brings the Zentraedi to question their own predicament, such as things like their segregation of sexes.

### Damn tragedy

Another feature of this middle, warlike, era of mecha is the theme of tragedy.

The Japanese have never been as squeamish as the Americans when it comes to considering their young people's maturity in accepting fairly adult concepts. The concept of tragedy and loss is central to the war theme – in fact, without appreciating the inherent tragedy and folly of war, one risks trivialising it, which is arguably a far more dangerous message for young people than the fact that people actually die in war. As such, one of the rights of passage for the protagonists in these mecha series was the loss of a loved one, a family member or a close companion, such as when the hero of *Macross* – Hikaru Ichijo (Rick Hunter in *Robotech*) – loses his oldest friend, and 'big brother', Roy Fokker, in tragic circumstances.

Kido Keisatsu Patlabor  
(1988)



Mobile Suit Gundam 0080:  
War In The Pocket (1989)



Mobile Suit Gundam F91  
(1991)



TODAY  
Neon Genesis Evangelion  
(1995)



Gasaraki  
(1998)



Other series in this era include the multitude of *Gundam* series, only some of which even follow the original timeline and universe, as well as *Fang of the Sun Dougram* (1981), which follows a civil war on a planet where rebels fight the Federation that rules the world, and *Votoms* (1983), where another ace pilot gets embroiled in a civil war.

By the end of the 1980s, the *Gundam* formula had almost reached saturation, and relatively few more mecha series were to be released in subsequent years. One of the most popular from the late '80s was *Kido Keisatsu* (1988), which had mecha not only performing military roles, but being integrated into society performing labour roles, hence the name. In order to keep these powerful machines in check the police are issued their own Patrol Labors, abbreviated to 'Patlabors'. The plot in *Patlabor* shows a maturation on popular themes and moves towards more esoteric concepts of society and control, and are not just about simply war and conflict.

Others in this mould are *Bubblegum Crisis* (1987) and Masume Shirow's manga, *Appleseed* (1985). *Bubblegum Crisis* follows the futuristic post apocalyptic theme, except this time it's Tokyo rebuilding from a massive earthquake, and takes influence from the likes of *Bladerunner*, with synthetic biomechanical Boomers that need to be kept in check by four young women wearing power armour. *Appleseed*, even though it's not an anime series, has several parallels. Instead of straight civil war, the plots in both series are far more complex, raising issues of humanity, identity, technology, and freedom – although *Bubblegum Crisis* has been called more cyberpunk, and has a stronger emphasis on humour.

The mecha in *Bubblegum Crisis* and *Appleseed*, like *Patlabor*, are smaller – more like personal power armour than the towering giants of other series.

## Today: Mecha reborn

By the mid 1990s, there were few mecha anime series in development, with the themes of the 1980s virtually exhausted. It was time for a change of direction, and series with complex plots and mythic allusions, like *Appleseed*, were pointing in the right direction.

The real change was brought via the incredibly popular *Shin Seiki Evangelion* (1995), meaning *Gospel of the New Century*, aka *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. *Evangelion*

has perhaps one of the most complex plots of all mecha series, yet it also draws influence from all the preceding generations of anime. The plot finds the Earth in the future, after the ubiquitous post-apocalyptic event where Angels, in the form of giant destructive mecha/creatures, are wreaking havoc on Earth. The only line of defence was Earth's own version of the Angels, the mecha EVA units, and their psychologically complex teenage pilots.

Despite the giant robots, the superpowers, the bright colours, the post-apocalyptic setting and the teenage pilots, the world itself is quite unlike that of other mecha series. It is steeped in mythic and biblical allusions, such as the Angels themselves, as well as references to Adam (the first man created by God), Lilith (according to the Kabbalah, the first woman created by God, who asserted her equality with Adam, and eventually abandoned the Garden

### 8-bit (1983 – early '90s)

Mecha games in this era emerged as relatively simple shooting games, such as *Gradius* and *R-Type*. Anime and manga tie-ins were also there in small doses, with the *Macross* (*Robotech*) and *Gundam* games starting a lasting trend in the industry.

### 16-bit (early – mid '90s)

With the improved hardware, the traditional shoot-em-up featuring robots and spacecraft improved upon their predecessors, though more interesting to note was mecha's early foray into RPGs and fighting games.

### 32-bit (mid – late '90s)

While 2D mecha gaming was refined during this period, 3D was the new frontier. Mecha made major inroads in terms of action titles, though it continued to infiltrate other genres, beat-em-ups and RPGs, with greater sophistication.

### 128-bit and beyond (1999 – today)

The current generation of consoles have not only improved the aural and visual aesthetics for mecha titles, but their gameplay as well. It is in the action and adventure departments that mecha are more prominent today, despite their influence upon various genres.

of Eden to become something of a demon) and the Lance of Longinus (the spear used to impale Jesus when he was on the cross), among others.

*Evangelion* also spawned other series with a similar technological/mythic fusion, such as *Gasaraki* (1998), which is slightly less obscure than *Evangelion*.

While mecha are not in as strong vogue as they were in the 1980s, there are still series in production, and a huge demand among mecha fans. Add to that the proliferation of mecha-based computer and role playing games, and the genre is sure to live on for many years yet.

**Know your mecha games**  
Sean Boden re-lives some of the greatest mecha hit games.

#### R-Type

Irem's *R-Type* has managed to make an appearance in every console generation to date and despite the difficulty, remains one of those niche titles popular among fans.



#### Gradius

*Gradius* is one of Konami's long-celebrated franchises. While the traditional 2D-shooter premise may sound boring to many, the precise gameplay and rampant pyrotechnics continues to entertain shoot-em-up aficionados.



#### Treasure

*Treasure* was formed by ex-Konami staff, so it's not surprising that shooting, mecha and explosions appear frequently throughout their titles. *Gunstar Heroes* became a 16-bit hit, while *Radiant Silvergun* is still considered a shooting fan's dream come true.



#### Virtual On

*Virtual On* became one of those genre-defining games, with its intuitive gameplay and excellent mecha designs. One of the more interesting characters was a pink, *seifuku*-dressed mech with a love-heart attack.



# RONNY YU

Fred Topel finds himself alone with a master of slasher movies who calls Australia home... and discovers why Ronny Yu is no mummy's boy.



**Gaijin!** : When did you move to Australia? Why?

**Ronny Yu:** 1996. Because my family had been here 30 some years. And after I got married, my mum said, 'You've got to come and join the family now.'

**Gaijin!** : What exactly is your home life like?

**Ronny Yu:** Oh, very normal.

I really enjoy housework. So I like doing gardening, picking weeds, vacuuming. I really enjoy all that, so every time I finish work, I'll fly back and lay around, do some housework for a few months, then go back and start working again.

**Gaijin!** : How did you end up in Hong Kong if your family's in Australia?

**Ronny Yu:** Well, because my parents didn't really like me being in the film industry after I graduated from Ohio University, by that time, my parents had already migrated to

Australia, so I got to be by myself in Hong Kong. So that's how I got to do what I like most.

**Gaijin!** : So you ran away?

**Ronny Yu:** [LAUGHS] Well, more like with my parents' consent.

**Gaijin!** : What do you think of Hong Kong cinema today?

**Ronny Yu:** Well, I was in Hong Kong about two months ago, and it seems like it's really picking up now China has opened up the market for Hong Kong production. They allow them to come in and shoot movies there and the censorship, the distribution network has opened up a whole lot bigger for Hong Kong product.

I think it's looking good and a lot more people, because the market now is such a big market in China, and the investors are more confident to put money into making Hong Kong movies. So I think it's going to be a good turning point for Hong Kong movies.

**Gaijin!** : John Woo said Korean and Thai films took over though?

**Ronny Yu:** For a very short time. I think audiences like anywhere else are just looking for something fresh, something new. For a while, I think a year or so, the audiences just wanted to watch something different, and that's why they really embraced the Korean and Thai movies. But now, I think they've gone back to the Hong Kong movies.

**Gaijin!** : Do you miss working in Hong Kong?

**Ronny Yu:** It really all depends on the subject matter. If there's a story that I really love and it takes place in China and Hong Kong, then definitely. I think the story is really the key.

**Gaijin!** : What does Hong Kong style mean to you?

**Ronny Yu:** The flexibility. In the middle of a shot, if it doesn't work, in Hong Kong, everybody will try to make it work. The props and every department try to make it work. In Hollywood, it's difficult that way. They need a lot of prep time to prepare for a shot. Everything has to be known or they understand beforehand, well in advance. When it's time to do a shot, if some problem arises, maybe we need to do something else or change a prop or something, they would have a hard time adjusting to it. I think that is the thing. Especially for a shot, a camera move or something. You have to

**'I really enjoy housework. So I like doing gardening, picking weeds, vacuuming.'**

**Gaijin!** : What experiences have you shared?

**Ronny Yu:** The same thing. It's just the system. It's so different from Hong Kong. You cannot have that much flexibility here, but that is the nature of the system. Either you go with it, or you don't, so you just have to learn.

**Gaijin!** : Why was it important to you to get into the Hollywood system?

**Ronny Yu:** Well, what's the saying, when in Rome... If you want to make American movies, you can't really come in and try to change everything. The system, the machine has been working for so many years, for so long, you cannot just come in and say, "Okay, I'm a director and I want to do it differently." Then you're on your own. Nobody can support you that way because you're so different.

**Gaijin!** : What are the advantages of working in Hollywood?

**Ronny Yu:** The whole reasoning behind, the dream of making a Hollywood movie for me is the market. It's such a big market. Everywhere in the world, you point your finger, you open a world map, point your finger, it has a chance to show your film. If you make Hong Kong movies, you can only point to a Chinatown or Asian territory.

know exactly if you want to put it there 10 days ago, or a month ago. When you get on location and say, "Oh, that doesn't look well now." Maybe something changed and you want to put a camera on the other side. Everybody's like, "Oh my God, you're going to do that now?" I think the flexibility is what Jackie Chan was saying. It seems like his hands are tied. In Hong Kong, you have to be more flexible in your thinking, even in your operation.

**Gaijin!** : Do you talk to a lot of the other Hong Kong artists who have made the move to American films?

**Ronny Yu:** No, I don't have that opportunity. The closest is John Woo because he's also living in Los Angeles and I spend a lot of time in Los Angeles. So, he's a guy I sort of talk more with.

working with Chow Yun-Fat [on *Postman Fights Back*], he's a great actor and we had such a good time.

**Gaijin!** : Do you think wirework is overexposed now?

**Ronny Yu:** I think wirework is only good if you try and enhance the story, telling a story. If you just abuse it, any time you use wirework, then I think it's boring. For example, you cannot have Freddy and Jason fight like Crouching Tiger. It's just unbelievable. It takes you away from the story. I think that's bad. Even *The Matrix* works because it is dealing with a fantasy, with a sci-fi movie. Same with my movie. *The Bride with White Hair* is a surreal fantasy movie, so that's why the wirework enhances it rather than took over.

**Gaijin!** : What would be your dream project?

**Ronny Yu:** I just want to have a chance to work with great actors, great American actors. That's all.

**Gaijin!** : How do you find humor in macabre situations?

**Ronny Yu:** I think this is a very personal thing because I have polio, so I didn't get to have a lot of friends to play with, because I was a burden to them. I could not run and all those things. But rather than looking at it as so sad, feeling sad for yourself, I try to find some fun out of it. I try to find some fun out of a difficult situation. It's sort of like therapy, to get over from day to day to day. So, I think that's what kept me going for so long.

**Gaijin!** : What humor do you derive from polio?

**Ronny Yu:** Don't take things so seriously. Always look at the bright side. There's always something fun out there in a difficult situation.

**Gaijin!** : How did you overcome physical obstacles about directing?

**Ronny Yu:** Find a good assistant director that does all the running and climbing for you, and also a

good cameraman that will climb up there and look at an angle and tell me. Find the best people around you to do some of the physical work for you.

**Gaijin!** : Besides *Bride with White Hair*, what older films would you like people to notice?

**Ronny Yu:** There's a movie called *The Postman Strikes Back* with Chow Yun-Fat. That one is interesting. Also, I made a horror movie called *The Trail* which is almost like *Seven Samurai* but in a more horror and comedy way. Also, I did a movie with Chow Yun-Fat called *The Tenant*.

**Gaijin!** : What are your favorite movies to watch?

**Ronny Yu:** *The Godfather*. And also *Once Upon a Time in America*, the Sergio Leone movie, because that's the movie that has so much friendship, loyalty and betrayal. Same as *Godfather*. I always love those, and *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Seven Samurai*, *High and Low*. All the Kurosawa movies. In the beginning, when I was younger when I'd look at it, I'd just go for the action. Now as I grow older, I can see more into the moral message about society. That's why I love to revisit all these movies time and again, *The Godfather*, *Seven Samurai*, *High and Low*, *Yojimbo*, *Red Beard*, all that.



Illustration: Komala Singh

# HAS JOHN WOO SOLD OUT?

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**  
Fred Topel starts off  
asking Mr Hardboiled

about what's happened  
to his career since he  
arrived in Hollywood...  
and somehow ends  
up talking about food.  
Mmm... tasty.

much like a real story, it had a lot of suspense and a bit of a love story. So I toned down the violence and made the action sequences more realistic and more funny.

**Gaijin!** What does Hong Kong style mean to you?

**John Woo:** I don't know how to describe the Hong Kong style. I think it's mainly about action, fast-paced, sometimes funny, sometimes a lot of great energy.

**Gaijin!** Have you changed or compromised your style since making American films?

**John Woo:** Well, Hollywood has a much bigger market and the movies are so commercial... so sometimes I have to minimise it a bit. I tried to make a movie that would appeal to all kinds of countries, and make all kinds of people like it. Then in the meantime, I have to tone down the violence a little bit. So in *Paycheck*, since this looks pretty

movie and there's a gangster movie, I don't know the English name, starring Tony Leung. But I think the business is still poor and some people made some pretty cheap movies, made in seven days or three days. But now it's getting better, and they have quite a few good action movies and good dramas.

**Gaijin! How do you think they can they fix the business?**

**Gaijin! Do you miss working in China?**

**John Woo:** I don't wish to make a movie in China – not in Hong Kong – because I think I have done enough in Hong Kong. I like to move on. My dream is to work in a different place, a different country. I just want to try something new, new things.

**Gaijin! Will you work with Chow again?**

**John Woo:** Yeah, I have a project I've been working on for a long time: *The Divide*. The story is of a Chinese and an Irish immigrant. They're building a railroad in America in the 19th century. That movie is for Chow Yun-Fat.

**Gaijin! What do you think of Hong Kong cinema since you left?**

**John Woo:** I feel some of the movies were pretty poor and didn't work well. And the whole business is pretty poor. A lot of people are out of jobs. But there have been some really good movies like Wong Kar Wai's

**Gaijin! Is it more complicated to work with big American actors like Ben Affleck?**

**John Woo:** I think it's pretty easy because I have no problems working with Ben, Travolta and even Tom Cruise. They're really nice and very easy to work with. It's just the same as though I'm working with Chow Yun-Fat. We worked together as friends. I didn't see any problem.



'Hong Kong people don't have much desire to watch Hong Kong movies. In Taiwan, Japan, and even in some other countries, they all watch American movies. So that's a big problem.'



Korean movies, there's a lot of crying, very emotional. But now, they've changed. The whole country, they all changed. Their movies have a lot of life and also have a lot of new techniques. They've changed a lot.

**Gaijin! Is there such a thing as a 'John Woo film' and Has that changed?**

**John Woo:** Yeah, I think it's changed a little bit. Maybe I'm getting older. Before, I made so many tragic movies. My movies are very dark movies. Now I think I should try something happier, like in *Paycheck*. I did intend to try to make the audience feel happy. I wanted them to feel happy to have seen the movie. I also wanted them to feel happy about the future. Even though there's so much going on, so many bad things happening, I still wish that people know the future is not that terrible. There's always hope, there's always a lot of good people around. Before I made this movie, I found there was so much depression in this world. Especially in Asia, I've heard a lot of young people... they didn't see much of a future and didn't feel much hope. And even some young kids, very young kids, they gave up their life. It happened in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan. I feel very sad about it. Sometimes I'm asked to say something to those young people, but I don't know how. So I just want to make a movie to let them know that there's always hope and just don't give up. Just try to find a way to work it out.' Just like Michael Jennings.

»

**Gaijin! Do you like any Korean movies?**

**John Woo:** I've only seen a couple of them. I like them. They have a brand new energy. Before, in

**Gaijin!** Why do you keep putting your trademarks in American movies?

**John Woo:** Because I like those moments. And sometimes I just try to create some fun and interesting moments, like the Mexican standoff. It's for fun and they never fire. And for the doves, I always like it. They became one of the major symbols in my movies. The dove represents peace and love and spiritual purity.

**Gaijin!** Why are doves such an important symbol to you?

**John Woo:** Well, I'm a Christian. I like using doves. They represent love, peace, beauty and spirit. Sometimes, they are messengers – they send a message from God. So, doves represent the purity and love that's important. I like to use them in a film to make actions have more of a meaning.

**Gaijin!** How satisfied are you that the films you're making in America are John Woo films?

**John Woo:** I wish I could have had full control. A real John Woo film, you know, the cost... besides trying to keep my own style, I really wish I could make something really meaningful.



'I wish I could have had full control. A real John Woo film, you know, the cost... besides trying to keep my own style, I really wish I could make something really meaningful.'

**John Woo:** Well, I think you only can find the truth from all the tragedy. I always believed that people find their true feelings from the tragic.

If a person has never been through anything and they live so peacefully and have been so lucky to never get hurt and have a good life, I don't think they will find the truth. Maybe I grew up in a really bad situation. My family was extremely poor when I was a kid and I have seen so much disaster that maybe I've learned something about life, really learned the meaning of life. So I like the tragic and I think you will see the real human nature in tragedy.

**Gaijin!** Why didn't *Bulletproof Monk*, which you produced, work well?

**John Woo:** I don't know. Was it because of the action? I heard some people were expecting action pretty much like *The Matrix*. Maybe some people wanted bigger action. I think the story was interesting and Chow Yun-Fat looked great in this film. And Sean Scott is a very funny character. I like that movie. Maybe the action wasn't big enough or it seemed like it didn't have much of a new idea. Maybe that was part of the reason.

**Gaijin!** Did you try that with *Windtalkers*?

**John Woo:** Yeah, I did try to do it with *Windtalkers*. I'm disappointed that it didn't work, but I'm still proud of the movie. So the reason I wanted to make that film was because it had so much great meaning and also feelings about honour and friendship and loyalty. I thought that it was a relevant, good movie.

**Gaijin!** So why didn't *Windtalkers* work?

**John Woo:** I still need to find out. Somebody said some of the characters in the movie were too clichéd and so that's why it didn't work. Like, the racist problem in the film is something you've seen in so many movies. Then some action was a little too much. But I still need to find out.

I think there are a lot of good things in the movie. Like the performance and all the actors, they're so great. And the war scenes look really nice to me.

**Gaijin!** Which of your movies are you most satisfied with?

**John Woo:** Quite a few. *The Killer*, *A Better Tomorrow*, *Face/Off*. I really love them. *Hard Boiled* – I had so much fun making that. And *Bullet in the Head* is really my favourite. I think in *Paycheck*, I kept a pretty good balance of the action, the love story and the suspense. I think I maintained a pretty good balance.

**Gaijin!** Have you ever had a bad accident on a set?

**John Woo:** No. Just some stunt guy got some minor injuries. We have so much concern about safety.

**Gaijin!** Are you moving away from big gunplay?

**John Woo:** No. It depends on the subject. Like in *Paycheck*, it's not all about action. It's about fate, about destiny and it's a very suspenseful

**Gaijin!** Why is there an element of tragedy in all of your films?

type of movie. So I think there's no need to use too many guns in the film. But in my future projects, I'm going to use guns.

#### Gaijin! What is your favourite weapon?

**John Woo:** You know what? I have never used a gun. I have never owned a gun. I've never fired a gun before. But if I need to use it in movies, I like a Beretta. The Beretta's so beautifully designed and it loads over 17 bullets. And it's an automatic weapon. It looks so strong and I think it's good for the hero type character.

#### Gaijin! Do you prefer guns to swords and martial arts?

**John Woo:** Actually, I really love martial arts movies and I learned so much from them. When I was making the gunplay scenes, I felt like I was making a martial arts sequence, using the two guns instead of a sword.

#### Gaijin! What is your favorite Kung Fu movie?

**John Woo:** Chang Cheh's One Armed Swordsman, King Hu's The Dragon Inn. Wonderful movies. The two of them are my favourites.

#### Gaijin! So how do you unwind? Do you cook?

**John Woo:** Yeah.

#### Gaijin! What do you cook?

The Beretta's so beautifully designed and it loads over

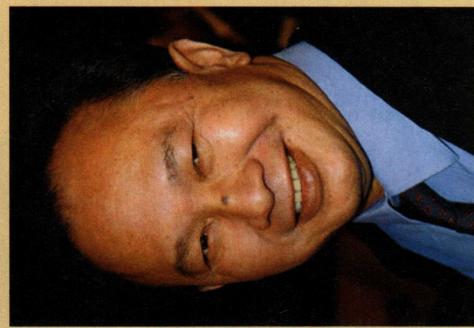
17 bullets. And it's an automatic weapon. It looks so strong and I think it's good for the hero type character.

**John Woo:** Chinese food. I like to cook seafood. For food, I'm very demanding. I like to maintain traditional foods.

#### Gaijin! Did you learn any special recipes or techniques from your mum?

**John Woo:** What I have learned from her was in old times, when I was a kid, because I was the eldest kid, I would take care of the family so I had to learn to cook. But at the time, we were so poor. We got supplies from the Government or from church. We usually had potatoes, milk, etc. so I cooked potatoes a lot.

I learned from her to cook potatoes with a little meat. It's very tasty. And then after I grew up, I learned to cook for myself. I love seafood. But cooking, it's kind of a relaxing thing for me. I'm so relaxed while I'm in the kitchen. In our work, there's always so much pressure, so many problems, so much confusion. I use cooking to calm down myself, to try to relax myself, to try to not think of movies. So it's a very relaxing moment. I can spend three to six hours in the kitchen. Sometimes, if I want to cook a big meal for 20 people, I can spend two or three days on the preparations.



#### AUTHOR: FRED TOPEL

Fred Topel, our man in Hollywood, has a wealth of experience in online and print media, including regular gigs with About.com, Daily Radar, The Wave Magazine, The Hollywood Reporter and Cinefantastique.





Mika Ninagawa

## Moments of concentration

'The moment I feel like a plant, or like a bug alighting on a flower, I release the shutter. When I'm not in this heightened state, I may shoot a beautiful flower beautifully, but that is all,' Mika Ninagawa has said. 'For me, the process of photographing a flower is something more, something that goes beyond the flower. When I'm photographing well, I am always floating on another plane – a place between this world and the world beyond.'

Only a Japanese photographer can get away with talking about their work as if it's the result of some oblique, meditative experience, a moment of visual *samadhi*. Mika Ninagawa's occasional lapses into an ethereal new ageyness are probably enhanced in translation, but her vivid colour prints of flowers, water, goldfish, children, and, in earlier works, Lolita-esque pop

*idoru* are like a glimpse of another, preternatural world hidden within the spectrum of our everyday awareness.

'I just sort of wander around,' she once explained, 'and things call out, "Take a picture of me!" It doesn't matter if it's a flower or a child or whatever, I find my subjects because they just seem to call out to me.'

In the mid-'90s, Yurie Nagashima and Hiromi Toshikawa (better known as Hiromix) were at the vanguard of a new generation of photographers that became known, thanks to the critic, Kotaro Izawa, as *onnanoko shashinka* – loosely, 'girlie photographers'. Untrained, disinterested in technique, they turned simple, 35mm point-and-shoot cameras on themselves to capture the commonplace of their lives – the beds they slept in, the people they slept with,

the food they ate, the clubs they frequented, their pretty friends and, most successfully, their own young bodies – all with a post-modern disregard for 'good' subject matter, framing, focus, or exposure. The youngest and prettiest, Hiromix, became as famous as some of the young J-pop stars that came to her to be photographed to add a patina of credibility to their image.

Although Mika Ninagawa shared the prestigious Kimura Ihei Photography Award with Nagashima and Hiromix in 2001 (the first year in which women had ever been selected), she is viewed by Japanese critics as the leader of a second wave of *onnanoko shashinka*. More technically adept than most of her peers, she works with conventional SLR cameras and 35mm film rather than digital.

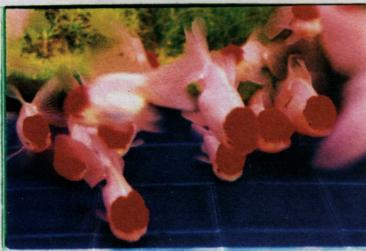
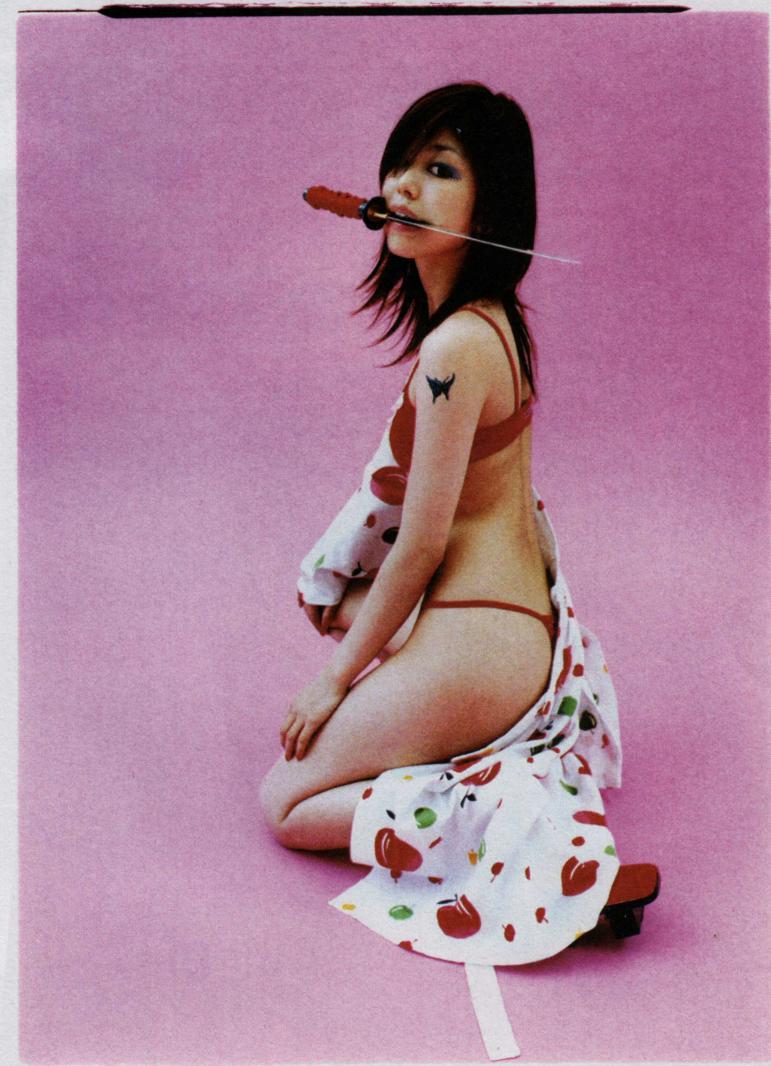
'When we think, "I can amend or fix this photo", we naturally become absent-minded,' she says. The artificial intensity of her still-lives and landscapes tap straight into the bright happy vacuum at the heart of Japanese pop culture.

'Japanese culture has traditionally been bright,' according to Ninagawa, who points to similarities between her work and 17th and 18th century *ukiyo-e*, colour prints produced from multiple woodcut blocks which depicted scenes from everyday life and landscapes, as well as popular actors, actresses, and courtesans.

But the improvisation in Ninagawa's approach to her work, the deliberate lack of structure in her creative process, is remarkably un-Japanese. 'Taking photos is about using a momentary concentration,' she explains. 'I don't like digital cameras because I can check a finished image while I am still taking photos. If I am tempted to finish because I think I have enough good images, it kills the opportunity to make better photos than I expected. Good photos can be the result of accidents or chances. My pictures are sometimes beyond my expectations when they are printed.'

Which can cause the now 31-year-old *onnanoko shashinka* to spout the sort of cute, bubble-gum zen that permeates her work. 'Photos are myself for me,' she says. 'I really love my photos and I feel they love me too.'

Creed O'Hanlon





# PORN STAR Mia Smiles

I know a few 'porn' actresses and most of them live down to the sluttier expectations of their fans. They stay slim on cocaine or crystal meth, and their boyfriends slash managers are usually ex-bikers with too many tattoos and little understanding of the concept of 'reliability'. So I was surprised when I first met Mia Smiles over coffee at The Standard Hotel, in West Hollywood. Dressed in a black knee-length skirt and a white blouse buttoned to the collar, the slender, 5'7" star of such hardcore classics as *Asian Street Hookers* (1998) and *Cumback Pussy 27* (2000), *Hot Dripping Pink* (2002), and *Club TropXXX 2* (2003), looked like a prim law clerk. Except for the protective shadow of her long-time off-screen partner and regular co-star, the buffed no-holes-barred onscreen persona that has made her North America's fastest rising, Asian-born porn star.

Mia was born 26 years ago in Korea, and as an adolescent, was adopted with her sister into a large family in California. She grew up on Point Dume in Malibu, where, she recalls, 'I had a very secure, loving and stable upbringing.'

At 19, she was eking out a living on the fringes of mainstream television and films when she was approached with a contract to perform in adult videos for the West Coast distributor, 4-Play. Her first on-screen coupling was in that staple series of North American hardcore, *More Dirty Debutantes* (No. 58), directed by the notorious Ed Powers: 'Adorable, sexy, and lovely.'

Mia Smiles will brighten up any day or night! the prapic director wrote in his liner notes. She definitely has that heat and charisma of the classic debutante.' No longer a debutante, although still youthful and unhardened, she has appeared in over 400 adult videos during the past seven years.

**Gaijin!**: So do you have a favourite scene?

**Mia smiles:** I have a few. One was for the production house, Adam & Eve, directed by Nic Orleans, and it was a food fetish scene with Chris. We had icing, raspberries, candy in many colours... Chris used my body as a canvas before we did a hot scene. Chris and I have also done just about all the fetishes: painting, latex, food, spanking, stockings, feet, splitting, and just about everything else – as well as, of course, simple and romantic boy/girl. The girl/girl scene that sticks out most in my mind is one I shot with Felecia for Ed Powers. Lorena and Jake Steed were both in it but Felecia is the one who made it memorable. This was the first time a female got me to orgasm.

**Gaijin!** ... Have you ever got, umm, lost in a scene?

**Mia smiles:** Most of the time, it's work, and I am aware of the entire set around me. There have been a few times when I have gotten so wrapped up in the scene I was able completely to forget about the set. I enjoy most of my scenes because I do have a list of people I will work with (as well as a list of those with whom I won't), so I'm more comfortable

during a shoot. There are a lot of fun moments, but there are a lot of hard ones too. The best-looking scenes I'm happy one way or another.

**Gaijin!**: Producers and directors describe you as being very dependable. Do you have a manager or an agent? **Mia smiles:** I do have an agent, but that usually only helps me to get work with brand new companies. I book both Chris and me. I am responsible for my own PR and try to make appearances at various conventions and awards shows. There are times when companies ask me to sign at a convention booth for them to promote a movie, but again, I pick and choose what I want to do.

**Gaijin!**: You met Chris when you did a scene together, five years ago. Does he ever get jealous of you? **Mia smiles:** He never gets jealous of my work, but he doesn't really have that many opportunities to do so. I have been known to get jealous on a few occasions. Every so often... we will get a complaint from our neighbour upstairs... because we are being too loud during sex late at night.



MIA SMILES

Illustration by Gary Lau

AUTHOR: CREED O'HANLON

Creed O'Hanlon, Contributing Editor, divides his time between Los Angeles and Tokyo, where he works in the increasingly fuzzy intersection of technology, entertainment and marketing.



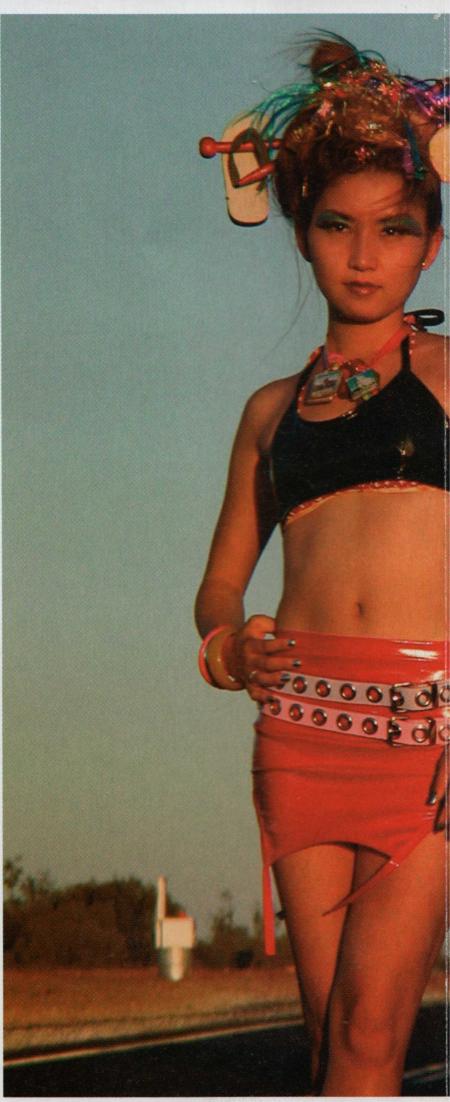
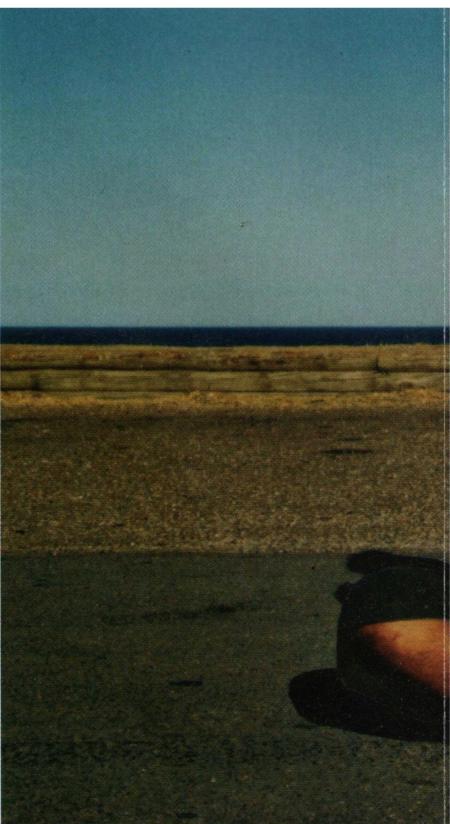
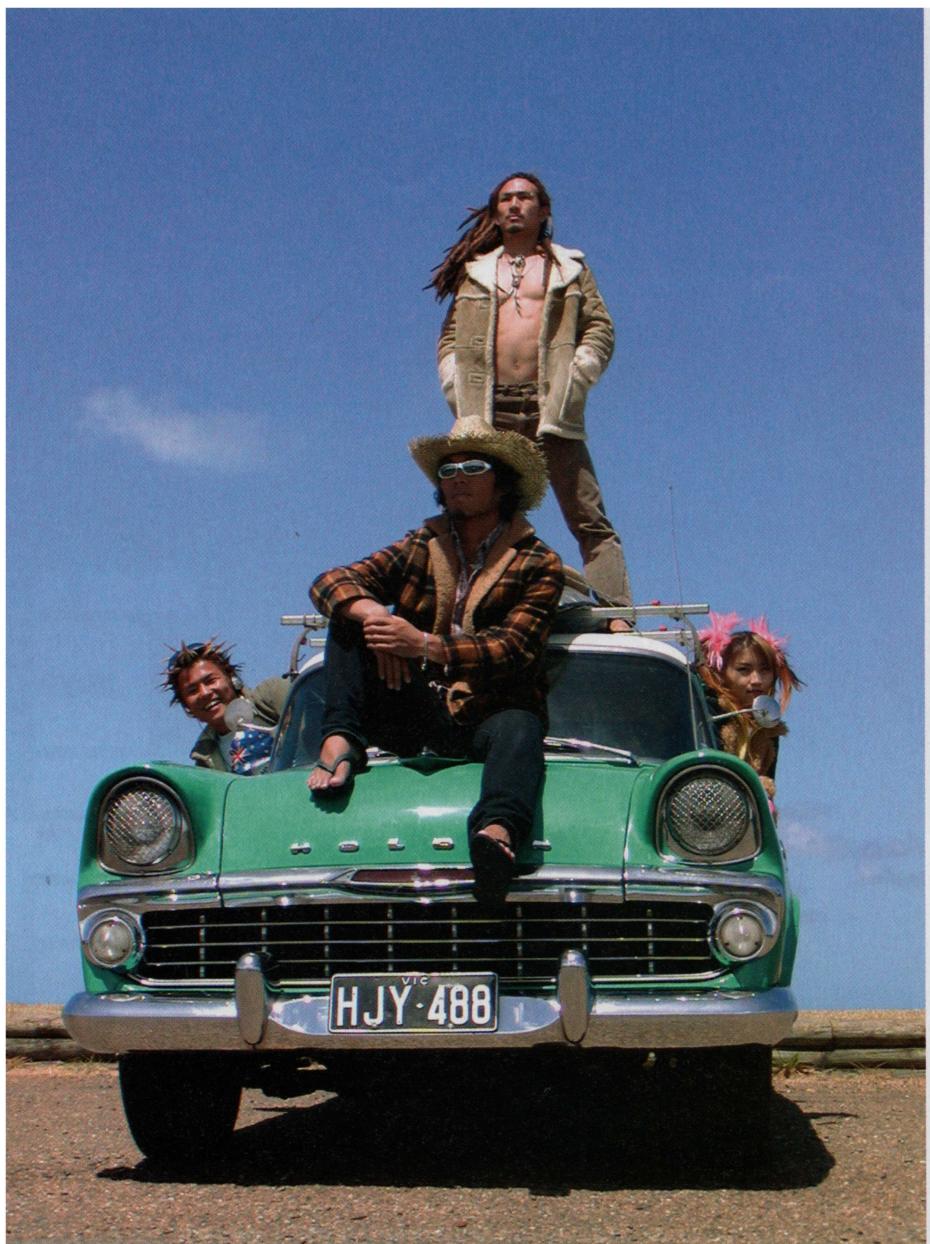


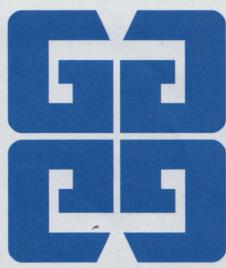
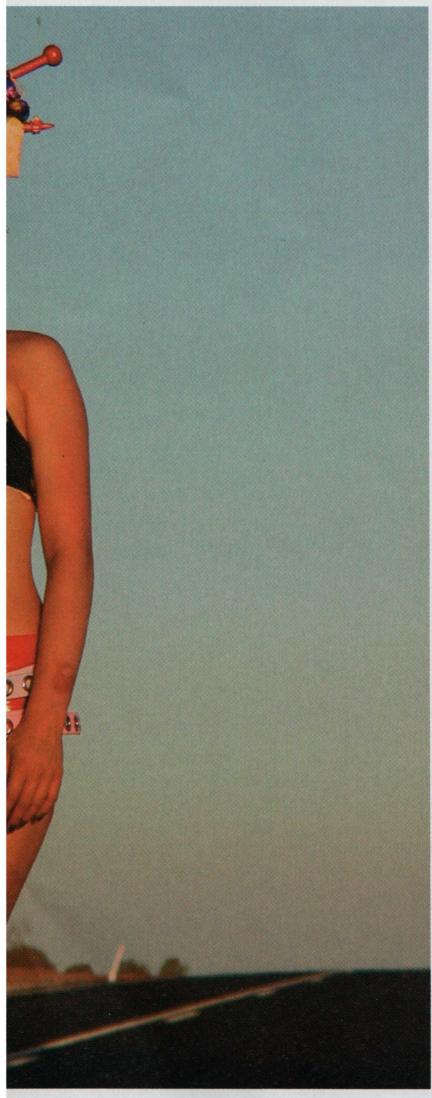
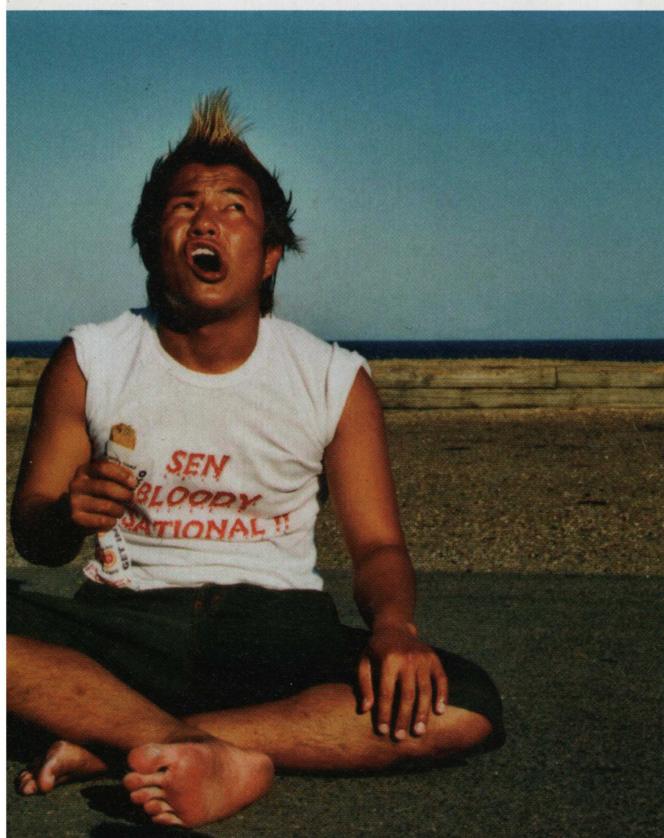
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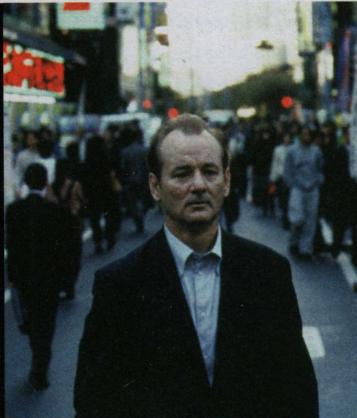
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# 101 TEMPTATIONS

## Watch / listen / play / touch / learn / relax

**MOVIES**

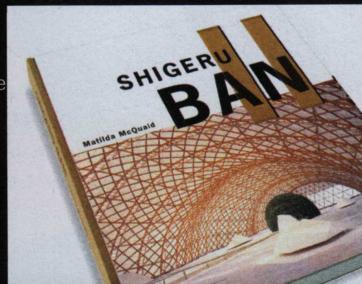
052 The Last Samurai  
 054 Ken Watanabe Profile  
 055 Paycheck  
 056 Infernal Affairs / Enter the Dragon / Devdas  
 057 Lost in Translation / Fantasia / In the Realm of the Senses / Magic Kitchen  
 058 Princess Blade / Monkey / My Sassy Girl / Running on Karma  
 059 Seven Samurai / Bichunmoo / The Grudge / Zhou Yu's Train

**ANIME**

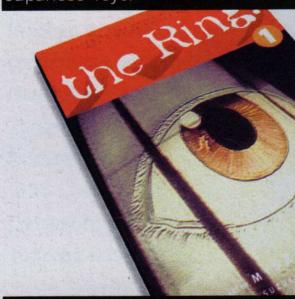
060 Grave of the Fireflies / Heat Guy J / Final Fantasy Unlimited / Samuari Deeper Kyō  
 061 Millennium Actress / His & Her Circumstances / Transformers the Movie / Initial D Battle: 01  
 062 Last Exile – 01: First Move / King of Bandit: Jing / Neon Genesis Evangelion – Movie Collection / The Twelve Kingdoms vol. 1  
 063 Minipato / WXIII: Patlabor Movie 3 Special Edition / Martian Successor Nadesico The Motion Picture: Prince of Darkness / FAKE

**BOOKS**

064 The Japanese Experience – Inevitable / Shigeru Ban / X The Movie Animation Perfect Book  
 065 Hong Kong Apothecary / The Image Factory – Fads and Fashion in Japan / Japan Unveiled: Understanding Japanese Body Culture / So Crazy Japanese Toys!

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 067 Maison Ikkoku vol. 1 / Megatokyo vol. 2 / Naruto vol. 2 / Hellsing vol. 1 / Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon vol. 5 / Trigun vol. 1

**GAMES**

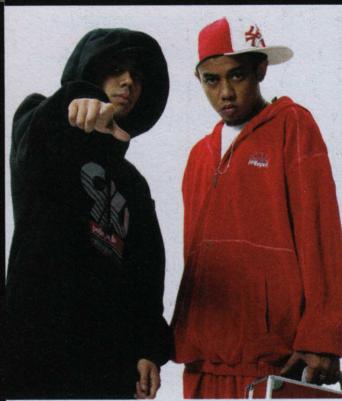
068 Brave Soul / Final Fantasy X-2  
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**COLLECTIBLES**

076 Best new toys and gadgets from Asia available in Oz NOW!

**MUSIC**

070 Too Phat interview  
 072 Essential Asian Flavas Vol 3 / Elementary Vibes Vol 5: This is the Winter of our Discoteque / Tales From Beyond the Groove  
 073 Flower Talk / To Love / Frontiers / Htm Tiartrop Fles  
 074 Can't Hold Us Down / Still Doin' it / Soundz of the Asian Underground

**ROBOTS**

078 HGUC MS-06 ZAKU II / Buster Gundam / Super Gundam



**Kinokuniya**

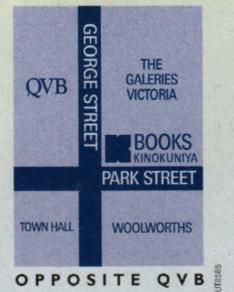
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# Seppuku, Bushido and the American way

A *gaijin* epic? David Kidd looks at *Dances with Wolves* in sheep's clothing.

The Last Samurai  
DIRECTOR: Edward Zwick  
STARRING: Tom Cruise, Ken Watanabe, Masato Harada and Billy Connolly

*The Last Samurai* is a sweeping epic about the ultimate *gaijin*. It's a long, dumb instalment in Hollywood's enduring Japanese phase, which tries hard to be a respectful interpretation of the events leading up to modern day Japan.

Cruise plays Captain Nathan Algren – a drunk, ex-war hero who's haunted by his Indian-massacring report card. His old boss arranges a meeting with a Japanese capitalist who wants him to train his troops in the hope of fighting off the samurai incursions against his beloved railroad. So, with a bit of Western know-how and a shipload of guns, Algren takes an inexperienced army into battle. Things get crazy, the army is slaughtered and Cruise is captured.

Here we learn a little more about what's going on in Japan, which is historically known as the Meiji Restoration. With the Tokugawa Shogunate overthrown, the Emperor Meiji is restored to power, although controlled by bureaucrats. The modernisation of Japan begins, foreigners pour in and the good ol' Samurai ways are tossed aside. Algren slowly begins to respect his honourable captors, forming a friendship with the conveniently English-speaking General Katsumoto played by Ken Watanabe. A love affair brews between Algren and his widow carer who, funnily enough, was widowed when Algren killed her husband. What self-respecting, late-19th century Japanese peasant wouldn't fall in love with the barbarous *gaijin* who killed her husband?

Eventually, he learns the ways of the Samurai, tosses his gun aside (bad move – see 'What should have happened!') and rekindles the dwindling fighting spirit of the dying warrior breed.

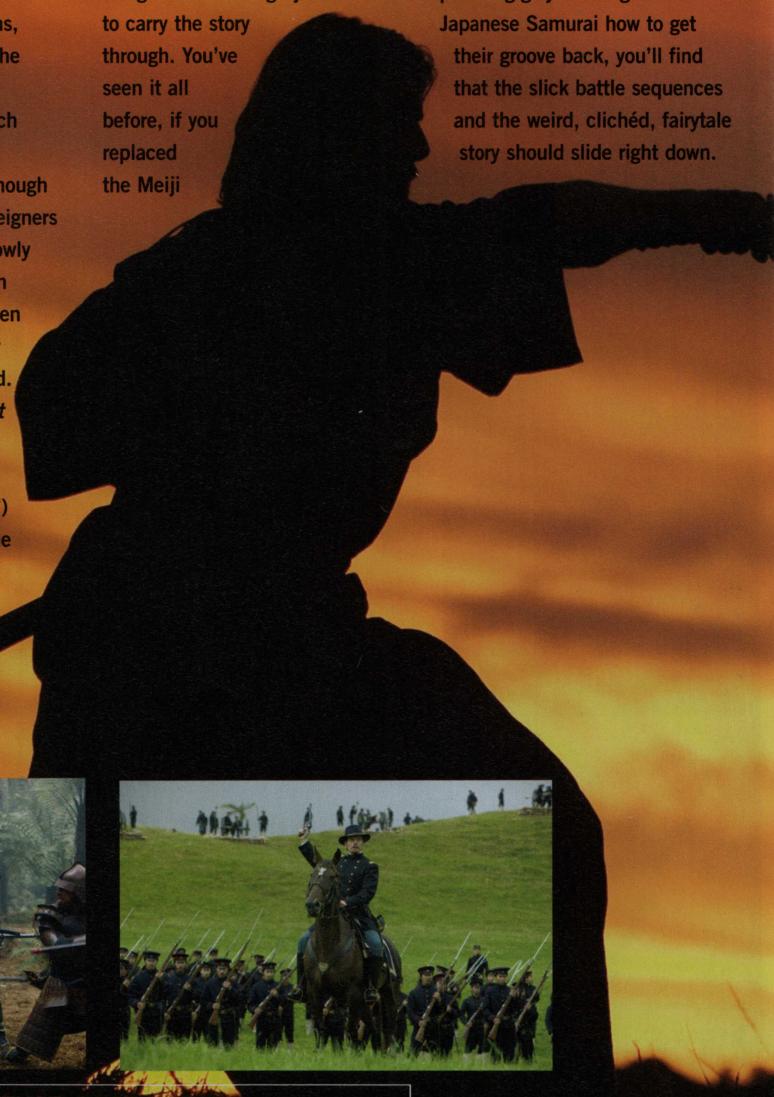
The key theme of this film is that modernisation is killing the samurai and, as a result, the Japanese culture.

The thing is, it wasn't necessarily a bad thing for Japan. The samurai rule was an oppressive, brutal, class-based society that most were happy to see the back of. This isn't just Hollywood being innocently creative, it's central to Katsumoto's character. We like the guy. He's honourable, caring, charismatic and an all round good bloke so why is he fighting? Is he fighting to have Japan stay in the middle ages? Is he fighting so the samurai can continue doing what they do? The question is left unanswered, but a constant demonisation of the West and the modern, capitalistic ways it brings seems enough justification to carry the story through. You've seen it all before, if you replaced the Meiji



Restoration with the American Civil War, you'd have *Dances with Wolves*.

But if you can stomach Cruise's toothy smile as the prancing *gaijin* telling the Japanese Samurai how to get their groove back, you'll find that the slick battle sequences and the weird, clichéd, fairytale story should slide right down.



AUTHOR: DAVID KIDD

David Kidd has studied Aikido, Tae Kwon Do and Wing Chun but he's still shit at Tekken. What's with that?

## What should have happened!

### David Kidd explains the Samurai battle tactics they should have gone for.

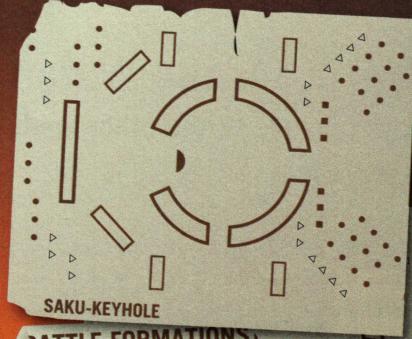
Weapons and tactics were continually evolving throughout the incessant wars in medieval Japan. Ever increasing armies, combined with the threat of the organised Mongols, brought a need for creative formations and advanced battlefield tactics.

Possibly the biggest spanner the Japanese Daimyos had to face was the introduction of firearms, which were employed by the Samurai armies centuries before the Meiji Restoration. In fact, the use of the arquebus (a primitive version of the musket) would drastically change the way samurai armies fought to become the most important and valuable weapon. Why Katsumoto's army didn't possess any is baffling, it's

no wonder they were slaughtered.

In an alternative, less insane version, here's how it should have happened: Firstly, Katsumoto would have seen the massive firepower of his enemy and, knowing he doesn't possess any weapons capable of firing a bullet, he should have either fled, committed *seppuku* or slapped Cruise's pasty, *gaijin* arse for leading them to their deaths. So, we'll assume that he has at least a few squads of arquebusiers, or five times as many archers.

Given that the enemy has a strong, deep front line you'd be crazy to charge into it. Instead, use the *Saku* or keyhole formation, which can hold off strong frontal assaults. It can absorb a



#### BATTLE FORMATIONS

- ● ARQUEBUSIERS (NOT TO SCALE)
- △ △ ARCHERS
- ■ SPEARMEN
- □ SAMURAI
- COMMANDER
- ◆ SIGNALS ▲ FLAGS

concentrated charge and the inner infantry and cavalry can wing out to either side for a pincer or flanking movement.

Alternatively, the *Gyorin* or fish scales formation is ideally suited to allow a weaker army to attack a specific point in the enemy's formation. It also covers its sides, preventing a stronger force from flanking it too quickly.

## The Samurai in Hollywood

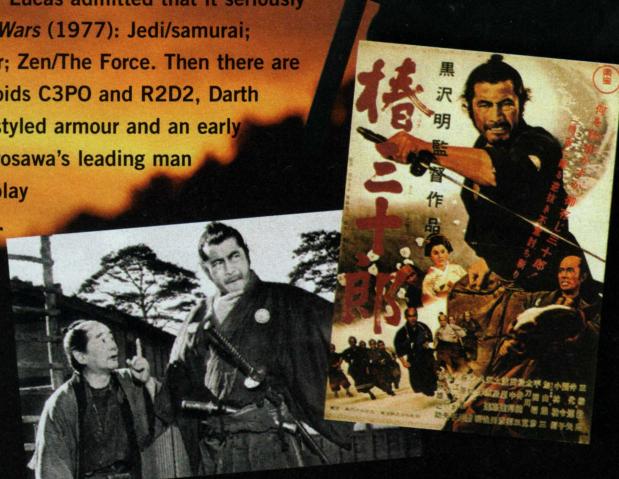
### Cefn Ridout's guide to movies with East/West influences

*The Last Samurai* is the latest of several Western detours down the way of the warrior. For over 50 years, the central figure on this path has been the legendary Japanese director Akira Kurosawa.

The father of the modern Samurai epic, Kurosawa was a big fan of Hollywood's classic westerns. While John Ford's shadow looms over *Seven Samurai* (1954), Kurosawa's film in turn inspired the better-known Hollywood makeover *The Magnificent Seven* (1960). Far superior is Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* (1969), which captures *Samurai*'s mythic undertow, doomed heroism and lyrical violence. Kurosawa returned the compliment with stylised interpretations of literary classics as *Samurai* sagas including *Macbeth / The Throne of Blood*, (1957) and *King Lear / Ran* (1985). Kurosawa's pitch black samurai comedy *Yojimbo* (1961) epitomises the East-West traffic of ideas. Loosely based on Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*, *Yojimbo* was appropriated by Sergio Leone for

his spaghetti western debut, *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). Less worthy is Walter Hill's remake *Last Man Standing* (1996), a refried Tex-Mex riff that shifts *Yojimbo*'s action to Prohibition Era Texas, but it's a masterpiece compared with *The Outrage* (1964), Martin Ritt's OTT remake of Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1951).

Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) is a romantic adventure that tells of a willful samurai general escorting a princess-in-disguise and two querulous peasants across enemy territory. Sounds familiar? Lucas admitted that it seriously influenced *Star Wars* (1977): Jedi/samurai; katana/lightsaber; Zen/The Force. Then there are the bickering droids C3PO and R2D2, Darth Vader's warlord-styled armour and an early plan to have Kurosawa's leading man Obi-wan Kenobe.



AUTHOR: CEFN RIDOUT

Cefn Ridout never recovered from his *Astro Boy* complex, creating *Manga Maria* in the '90s and currently scribing for *Newtype-USA* while nursing an addiction to *Iron Chef*.

## Sword for hire: Kensaku Watanabe

**Andrew L Urban pays homage to the other leading man in *The Last Samurai*.**

In the official production notes to *The Last Samurai*, in which Ken Watanabe plays the title role of Katsumoto opposite Tom Cruise, his is the fifth mini-biography, after Cruise, Timothy Spall, Billy Connolly and Tony Goldwin – all of whose screen time is less than Watanabe's, but whose profile in the West is higher. For now. It won't happen again.

Not that his ranking in the notes reflects his ranking on set: 'Finding the right cast is always a challenge,' says Cruise. 'When you see Ken Watanabe, you see how difficult it was to find someone so perfect. The sets are exciting and beautiful to walk on but we needed a talented group of people to put those together.' It was evidently a case of mutual respect; Watanabe has noted how all the Japanese cast appreciated Cruise's *esprit de corps*.

'Tom came to rehearsals in jeans and t-shirt,' he says, 'and helped set the tone for a very open, relaxed set. I felt like we were old friends... he came with the attitude of "let's make a great film together".' Ken's spoken English is measured, the result of him paying attention to his lines; but his inflection shows how well he understands the language. This, too, will help him forge a hot new career in Hollywood.

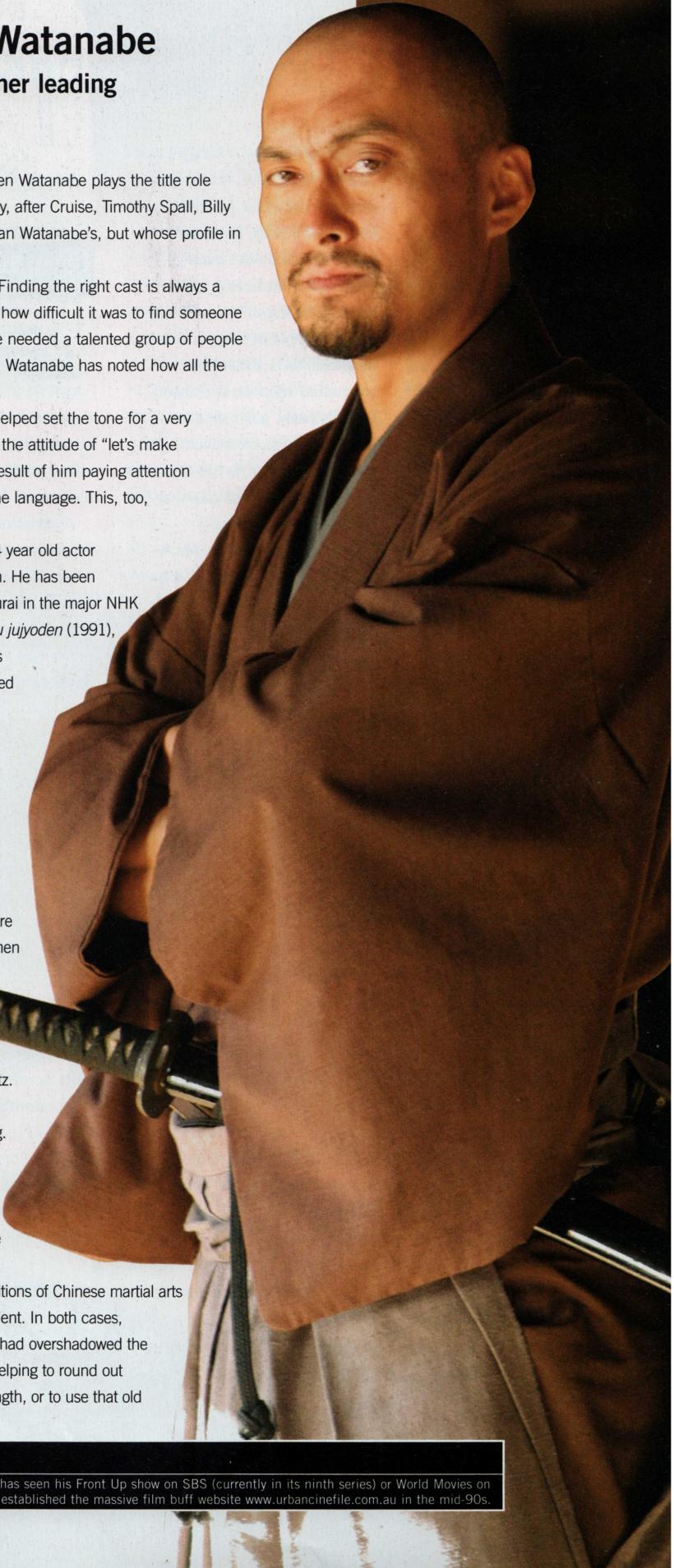
On the strength of his performance in *The Last Samurai*, the 44 year old actor is an overnight success – with a 20 year screen career behind him. He has been busy in Japanese television and film, including his roles as a samurai in the major NHK series, *Dokuganryu Masamune* and the historical epic, *Bakumatsu jujyoden* (1991), adapted by Mitsuyuki Yajushiji from Kouhei Tsuka's novel. But he's more than a samurai stand-by. Before television and film, he worked on stage: it was a teacher at England's National Theatre – of all places – who urged Watanabe-san to pursue acting, recognising Watanabe's 'presence' as part of his acting set of tools. He's a natural, as they say.

Said to have remained a minimalist through his rising career, he accumulates very little by way of material possessions – rather like a samurai. Separated from his wife, he has two grown-up children; an 18 year old daughter and 20 year old son.

You don't need to be an ardent, long time fan (of whom there are many in Japan, and a growing number in the US – especially women who are discovering his searing, sexually attractive side) to recognise that Kensaku Watanabe has the bearing of nobility and the evident decency of a lone ranger, ideally suited to leading man roles. 'Ken Watanabe is incredibly charismatic,' says *Last Samurai* writer/producer Marshall Herskovitz. 'You see in his face power, compassion, humour and sadness.' Ah yes, the sadness; that's the element that makes him interesting.

And you don't need to be particularly clever to recognise that Watanabe's initial impact on Western screen culture in *The Last Samurai* is a parallel to that of Chow Yun Fat's in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*. (Coincidentally both actors were around the same age when the respective movies were made.)

Where Chow Yun Fat opened mainstream Western eyes to traditions of Chinese martial arts culture, so does Ken Watanabe expose us to the Japanese equivalent. In both cases, the action elements (of martial arts as practiced by both cultures) had overshadowed the spiritual ones. Now, the interest in these have been awakened – helping to round out the action with something more than physical prowess: inner strength, or to use that old fashioned word (and notion) – honour.



**AUTHOR: ANDREW L URBAN**

Andrew L Urban is a familiar face to anyone who has seen his *Front Up* show on SBS (currently in its ninth series) or *World Movies* on cable. He has been a journalist for 30 years, and established the massive film buff website [www.urbancinefile.com.au](http://www.urbancinefile.com.au) in the mid-90s.

# Paycheck

■ STARRING: Ben Affleck, Uma Thurman and Aaron Eckhart  
 ■ DIRECTOR: John Woo

If you could somehow manage to see round the curvature of the Earth, you'd eventually be seeing your own backside, so to speak. It's a novel idea – and ideas are what writers are supposed to be good at. Take this a step further and you're looking ahead in time. Aha, the undying fantasy of time travel, or at least perving into the future. This is the material (by the persistently futuristic short story writer Philip K Dick) that propels John Woo into action, in the way Woo likes to do it.

With his latest film, *Paycheck* (Dick's story adapted by Dean Georgaris), it's a case of Woo goes to Hollywood, and does what Woo does best. His signature is all over the film, except perhaps for the casting of Ben Affleck. (I'd have gone for someone like Clive Owen, perhaps.) Not that Affleck is all that bad, although there's not enough heat between him and Uma Thurman, but action fans won't care. And Thurman is hot.

Here's the *Paycheck* premise: high-tech engineer for hire, Michael Jennings (Affleck) is accustomed to large paychecks: after each top-secret assignment, his memory is partially erased, for protection. His newest employer James Rethrick (Aaron Eckhart) promises Jennings an eight-figure paycheck for a three-year project involving an invention that can see into the future. But at the end of the assignment, his memory wiped, Jennings is told he has signed away his paycheck, and only gets back the brown envelope with his personal items - but the items aren't familiar. Assisted by his colleague, biologist Rachel Porter (Thurman), with whom he has developed a (forgotten) relationship, Jennings realises that these items are vital clues for survival in the race against time for Jennings to put the pieces together, before Rethrick, and/or the FBI kill him.

The story is spicily futuristic and while it's preposterous in the cold light of day, in the dark light of the cinema it's a diverting two hours. The fight sequences are captured with enough wide shots to give us the sense of reality and big-picture context that marks Woo's work, and the various close ups (for surprise, for information, for suspense or for character insight) add dynamically to the film's texture.

Woo gets in some slo-mo bullet FX, and his trademark (slightly shop-worn) guns-in-your-face face-offs. Tension, well maintained



throughout, peaks during the apocalyptic end game, when all the tricks are called in to demonstrate why this genre belongs in the hands of its most ardent devotees. There are just a couple of clunky lines of dialogue (like FBI head barking orders to seek out Rethrick's nerve centre, clamping his lips on 'I want this machine!'), but we're more concerned with the images here. And on that score, Woo delivers.

Production design is often inventive, and there are moments of humour and pathos, thanks to the engaging Paul Giamatti, while CGI effects are kept to a minimum, Woo preferring to use the camera as much as possible. *Paycheck* gives good payoff.

**Andrew L Urban**



## REVIEWS

### Infernal Affairs

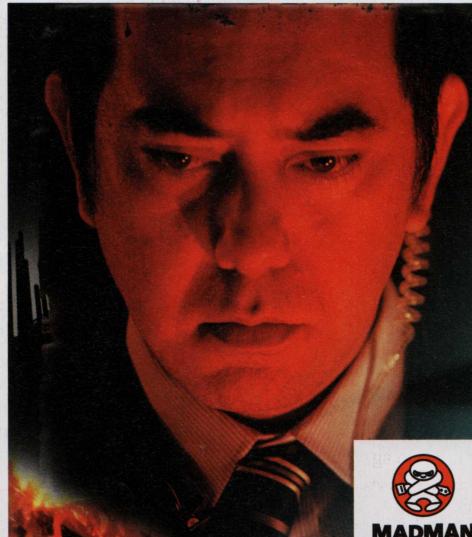
Andrew Lau, director/cinematographer of this film, has previously brought us classics like the *Young And Dangerous* series, and the special effects fest *Stormriders*. He can be variable, but when he gets it right, he gets it right in an earth-shattering, multiple-orgasming way.

The plot is simple: a cop undercover in the Triads crosses paths with a Triad undercover in the cops. The two leads, played with consummate skill by Tony Leung and Andy Lau, navigate the difficulties of their respective roles like soldiers crossing a minefield. The tension inherent in constantly living a double life, and indeed a double life that has a high risk of sudden violent death, fairly leaps off the screen. Both actors were nominated for Best Actor in the 22nd HKFA, with Tony Leung taking the statue, one of six that *Infernal Affairs* scored.

The support cast are without exception superb. Eric Tsang and Anthony Wong, as the Triad boss and police boss respectively, inhabit their roles with verve and passion. Wong won Best Supporting Actor for this role, away from castmates Tsang and Chapman To. This will become a classic.

**Alison Jobling**

Alison is a Tiger woman. Don't mess with her.



DIRECTOR: ANDREW LAU  
STARRING: ANDY LAU, TONY LEUNG  
DISTRIBUTOR: MADMAN, WWW.MADMAN.COM.AU

### HEROIC CINEMA

### Enter The Dragon

I love everything about *Enter the Dragon*. Critical distance? I think not. This is a film I feel particularly strongly about, and one I refuse to discuss in a removed manner. I love Bruce Lee. I love Bruce Lee's performance.

No matter what anyone says, Lee is *not* just a fighter – he's also a fine actor (and a snappy dresser). I love Lalo Schiffrin's score – it really is too cool for words. I love the way John Saxon constantly addresses the camera. I love Han's six identical female bodyguards (each more identical than the last). I especially love Jim Kelly ('Man, you're right out of a comic book!').

If you've never seen a Bruce Lee film, start with *Enter the Dragon* – it's Lee's most widely known film in the West and is probably closest to whatever you're imagining. Although *Fist of Fury* is a much better



film, *Enter the Dragon* is more accessible, as well as being a wild ride that can be enjoyed over and over again!

**Jonathon McCoy**

Jonathon is a Rat. He also carefully hangs a Mystic Knot in his South-West sector.

DIRECTOR: ROBERT CLOUSE  
STARRING: BRUCE LEE, JOHN SAXON, JIM KELLY, AHNA CAPRI

### Devdas

You watch *Devdas* knowing it's the most expensive Hindi film made and you can see where the money's gone. It is the very definition of opulence. No longer do we care about the masses, but instead we focus on the big people who live big lives in big mansions – who love big and lose big.

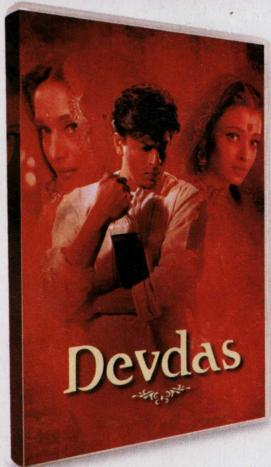
Basically everything about *Devdas* is big. The movie has an operatic air about it: loves are passionate, tragic and unrequited. Despite the necessary and almost idyllic opening where our two main protagonists, Devdas and Paro, are introduced with the mandatory upbeat and lively musical numbers, there is a constant touch of melancholy in every scene where the characters cannot shake that sense of regret and loss. If there is a villain in



the film it is the vagaries of fate that keep them apart; its human agents mere pawns to their own selfishness and pettiness, merely adding to the film's tragedy.

**Eugene Chan**

Eugene is a Fire Dragon. He rules.



DIRECTOR: SANJAY LEELA BHANSALI  
STARRING: SHAH RUKH KHAN, ASHWARYA RAI, MADHURI DIXIT

## Lost In Translation

Amidst blockbuster action films in multiplex cinemas, Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* is like a haiku: An understated, tender, humorous love story. It's the story of two Americans in Tokyo: Bob Harris (Bill Murray), a middle-aged movie star in town for a whiskey commercial shoot, but also to escape a flagging marriage, and Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson), a young college grad confused about her life plan, left on the sidelines while her photographer husband (Giovanni Ribisi) is off working. The two meet in the hotel bar and strike up an unlikely friendship born of jetlag, cultural dislocation and a common existential crisis. They hang out, explore the city and conspire in the shared joke of the wackiness of it all.

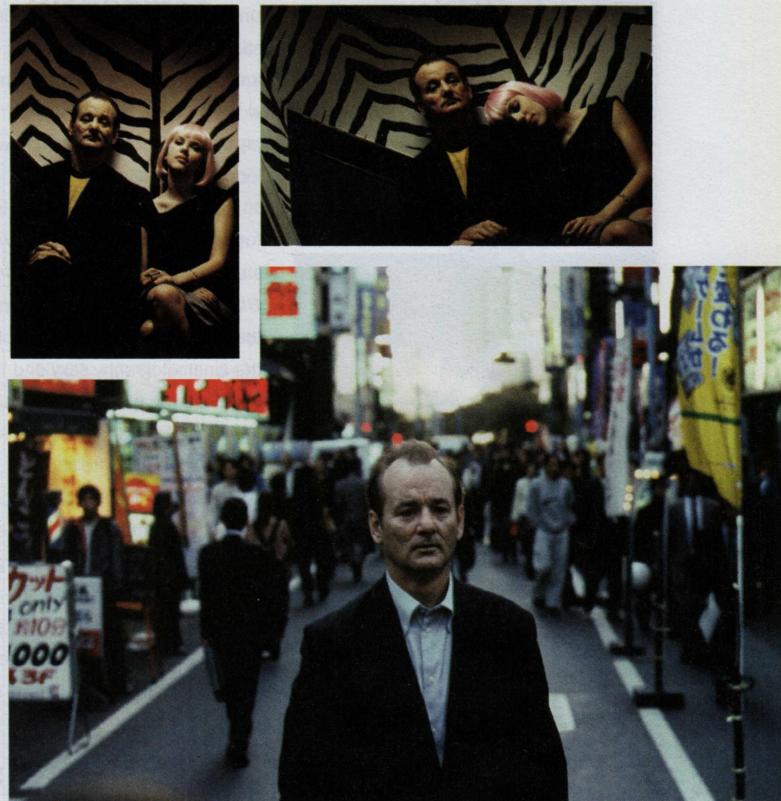
Murray and Johansson are immaculate. Underlying their platonic relationship is an easy-going flirtatiousness. Their performances capture familiar themes: brief moments of connection when you're feeling so disconnected; the immediate camaraderie of two people in a strange situation; or the times you can tell a stranger something that you couldn't tell someone you're close to.

The film is also a love-letter to Tokyo. A character in its own right, the city's extreme contrasts – from serene temples to video arcades – provide the perfect backdrop for emotional dislocation. Linguistic barriers, including a hilarious scene where a masseuse call-girl commands Murray to 'lip my stocking', adds to the sense of isolation.

Tokyo's neon-tinged nightlife, captured with hand-held camera sprints, with blissed-out guitars from former My Bloody Valentine Kevin Shields saturating the soundtrack, flawlessly conveys the beauty of impermanence. 'Let's not ever come back here,' says Charlotte to Bob. 'Because it'll never be as much fun again.'

**Siobhan Chapman**

Siobhan is a Wood Rabbit and one of AJB's best enterprise IT journo bunnies.



DIRECTOR: SOFIA COPPOLA  
STARRING: BILL MURRAY, SCARLETT JOHANSSON

[www.heroic-cinema.com](http://www.heroic-cinema.com)

## Fantasia



*Fantasia* is one of the latest of the rash of films that explode out of Hong Kong come Chinese New Year to put people in the right frame of mind for the new year. As such, the grittiness and pathos that has become synonymous with HK cinema is momentarily shelved for lighter subjects.

The film is a strange combination of *Harry Potter*, *Aladdin* (with lamp and three wishes), and old episodes of *Get Smart* (with incompetent protagonist and a fish phone). As aside there are jealous and not quite house-trained plush toys with sharp teeth; an evil, but stylish, pair of chopsticks; sexy yet amnesiac rocket scientists, and an astronaut thrown in for good measure. Add ham, and some cameos and you've got *Fantasia*.

**Eugene Chan**

DIRECTOR: WAI KA FAI  
STARRING: CECILIA CHEUNG, LOUIS KOO, LAU CHING WAN, JORDAN CHAN, FRANCIS NG, CHRISTY CHUNG

## In The Realm Of The Senses

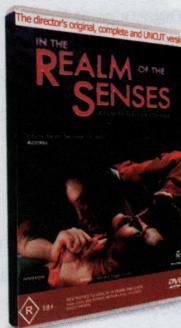
I'd probably have to call this one an example of hardcore arthouse erotica. You might call it a stick film with subtitles. Whatever we call it, it's a challenging film with an awful lot of sex.

It's a good film dealing with a troubling subject. Abe Sada's obsession with her lover Kichi, their month-long bonkfest, and their ultimate fate, have been the subject of at least two other films. The story itself, dating from 1936, is well-known in Japan, combining the topics of sex and death.

Director Oshima uses this action to lure us into the heady sensual world inhabited by the lovers. He does so with some of the most explicit scenes I've ever seen. For something made in 1976 Japan, that's quite astonishing.

**Alison Jobling**

DIRECTOR: OSIMI NAGISA  
STARRING: FUJI TATSUYA, MATSUDA EIKO



## Magic Kitchen



Today's world just does not seem to be lacking in romantic comedies.

The abundance of the genre is such that subcategories have spawned. One of those is no doubt the culinary subtype, into which *Magic Kitchen* fits quite well. Add to that the Chinese obsession with food and you have an entertaining light romance that doesn't go overboard with the theatrics. There are no great moments of melodrama (although much pining and indecision) or tragedy (but regret does shape our protagonists) or slapstick (though comedy presents itself in odd situations). Instead, we have an enjoyable Lunar New Year's film with some real chemistry between the cast, possibly the most well-known actors out of Hong Kong in Sammi Cheng and Andy Lau; some really nice looking food; and something to look forward to in the year of the Monkey.

**Eugene Chan**

DIRECTOR: LEE CHI INGA!  
STARRING: ANDY LAU, SAMMI CHENG

## Princess Blade

*Princess Blade* plays itself out in a neo-futuristic world. Born into a family of thugs-for-hire, descended from a line of super-ninjas, the Princess in question – one Yuki Takemizaguchi – doesn't know her worth. Nor does she seem to care,



until an old friend of her murdered mother stirs her blood and introduces betrayal and revenge into her world. Then it's every woman for herself and goddamn if this particular woman doesn't know how to kick some arse!

If other 'live-action manga' is this much fun, I for one am all over it. Swords, stunts, blood and betrayal, *Princess Blade* delivers one helluva flying kick in the cool action stakes. The plot is glossy, the cinematography sexy and the cast surprisingly capable. And best of all, it's gritty. This chick does not get knocked about with nothing to show for it but a broken nail. No, it's like watching a prettier, cooler version of Bruce Willis (OK, bad mental picture). Maybe forget I said that...), and any credibility the film has, considering its fantastical content, can and should be attributed to the fact that going up against a small army of ninja looks like it hurts.

And it's about time.

Deni Stoner

As a Rooster, Deni is always first to know about great Japanese films.



DIRECTOR: SHINSUKE SATO  
STARRING: YUKIMO SHAKU, HIDEAKI ITO  
DISTRIBUTOR: EASTERN EYE, WWW.EASTERNEYE.COM.AU

## Monkey!

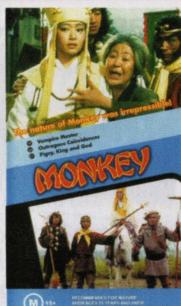
Monkey! was a Japanese television series made from 1978 to 1980, based on the Chinese classic *Journey to the West*. When it hit Oz it was a pretty big deal.

Now, the problem with things you're fond of when you were a kid is that they often turn out to be utter crap. But more than 20 years on, this show still rocks! There's an undeniable energy, partly from the storylines packed with monsters 'n' demons 'n' shit, but mostly because the show's dubbed, so the English actors have to bark out lines at double speed.

The special effects are hippy trippy seventies, and dammit, it works – a few crappy coloured lights and some mellotron and monkey magic happens, baby. The storylines are folksy parables with a bonafide Buddhist moral in every one.

Mark Morrison

Mark is a Snake – he's charming, beautiful, and eats rats.



## My Sassy Girl

This is a great movie. Why so? The hero, likeable but a tad shallow in his preference for quiet, pretty girls, doesn't look like a match for anyone with depth, and we're caught thinking this might be a predictable adventure. Not so: we meet the heroine on the train, pissed as a newt, and not at her best. She's even less appealing when she throws up, calls our hero 'Honey' and passes out, so the passengers assume he is her boyfriend, and make him clean up.

After that, our hero gets dragged around Seoul, abused, misused, and humiliated, but ever more determined to delve to the heart of this perplexing girl.

Alison Jobling



## Running On Karma



Johnnie To, the Sifu of Style, packs this film full of substance. A Shaolin monk leaves the monastery for the outside world when he begins to 'see' karma. He meets a cop with a large karmic debt, and knows she's destined for a violent death. This simple plot is the basis on which To weaves a tapestry with threads of karma, destiny, human relations, and responsibility, and weaves it damn well.

This is a film that reaches deep into your soul and rearranges the furniture. It's impossible to be flippant about this one. Very few films can change the way you see the world but this is one of them.

Alison Jobling



DIRECTOR: JOHNNIE TO  
STARRING: ANDY LAU, CECILIA CHEUNG

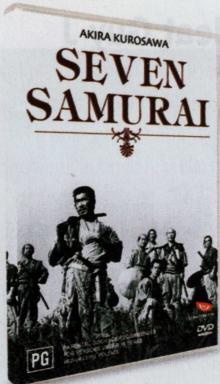
## Seven Samurai

*Seven Samurai* is quite possibly the most overrated film ever. That's a shame, because it's a fine film – one of the finest, in fact – but there is a tendency among certain groups of people (who should know better) to refer to it as *the greatest action film ever made*. Now, this really is stupidity, not only because everybody knows that *The Killer* is the greatest action film ever made, but also because, frankly, *Seven Samurai* isn't an action film at all. After all, action films are, generically speaking, about action, and although *Seven Samurai* features action, it's actually about, well, samurai!

The story is simple: seven samurai (there you go) are hired to protect a village from a group of marauding bandits. That's it. It's not much for a film with a 207 minute running time, but uniformly excellent performances from the cast and Kurosawa's brilliant direction carry it a long way. Ultimately though, *Seven Samurai* succeeds because it deals with themes (Honour! Class! Humanity!) that need 207 minutes to be expressed 'properly.' Magnificent.

Also, by the time you read this, the film should finally be available on Region 4 DVD from Eastern Eye, so what are you waiting for? Watch it now!

Jonathon McCoy



EASTERN EYE  
ASIAN CINEMA

DIRECTOR: AKIRA KUROSAWA  
STARRING: TAKASHI SHIMURA, TOSHIRO MIFUNE  
DISTRIBUTOR: EASTERN EYE, WWW.EASTERNEYE.COM.AU

## The Grudge

Children are scary. They may look cute in the margarine ads, but turn your back for just one second and they'll be gnawing on your entrails.

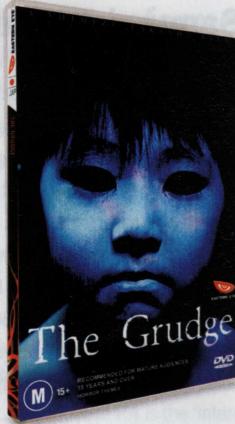
There's no entrail-gnawing in this film. No margarine. What there is includes a pallid child wearing eyeliner, a black cat that scares people senseless, and creaky dead people.

Now I understand about the cat: I once owned one like that. And most horror films could only be improved by creaky dead people, crawling down the stairs in a way no living person can. And I've already mentioned the children.

There's plenty of death in this film: it has a body count like a cricket score. An angry ghost is apparently quite comprehensive about victims. Most are killed in the family home, but some meet their fate elsewhere. I suppose ghosts, like the rest of us, enjoy getting out in the fresh air for a change of scenery every now and then.

So. Scary children, creaky dead people, overacting, and Japanese schoolgirls. Basically, what more could you want in a horror film?

Alison Jobling



DIRECTOR: TAKASHI SHIMIZU  
STARRING: MEGUMI OKINA, MISAKI ITO, MISA UEHARA, YUI ICHIKAWA  
DISTRIBUTOR: EASTERN EYE, WWW.EASTERNEYE.COM.AU

## Bichunmoo

*Bichunmoo* is a sweeping, historical tragedy, with ferocious whirling swordplay and lavish scenery. The hawk-faced hero, with flowing hair and brooding eyes, grows up thinking he's from a low-class family, but discovers he's the son of a Korean noble. The heroine, exceptional in a land where all the women are lovely, is the daughter of a Mongol general, and betrothed to a Han noble.

The story of their love, and the forces that conspire against them, is compelling. There's the strength of friendship, the passion of love, the ice of betrayal and the burning heat of revenge, all driving events to an inevitable conclusion. The manual of *Bi Chun Shin Gi* swordplay, a deadly martial art perfected by the hero's dead family, is sought by Han and Mongol alike, and makes our hero a target for both allies and enemies.

It's beautiful, tragic, exciting, and moving. It's swords, forests, love, death, and loyalty, all in gorgeous costumes. It's high-budget, high-action, hi-res. It's more epic than Cecil B DeMille.

Alison Jobling



DIRECTOR: KIM YEONG-JUN  
STARRING: SHIN HYEON-JUN, KIM HEUI-SEON  
DISTRIBUTOR: EASTERN EYE, WWW.EASTERNEYE.COM.AU

[www.heroic-cinema.com](http://www.heroic-cinema.com)

## Zhou Yu's Train

*Zhou Yu's Train* is once again a demonstration of why Gong Li is one of the best female actors (that is the PC way of saying it, right?) working in films today. Her role in *The Emperor and the Assassin*, while radiant, was really one of a creature to be edified and a trophy to be won.

Gong Li's character Zhou Yu, the young woman who is conflicted between romance and practicality, is a role in which her thespian talents truly shine. It is an exercise in stoicism to not empathise with her coming to grips with the paradox of what one has and what one desires when both are such polar opposites.

That is not to say that the male cast put in ordinary performances. Quite the contrary: they are almost as significant as the Chinese countryside which reflects the physical crossings Zhou Yu's unruly heart compels her to take. But neither can manifest this significance without Zhou Yu herself.

Eugene Chan

Zhou Yu's Train  
Left: Tony Leung Ka Fai as Chen-Ching, Right: Gong Li as Zhou Yu  
Photo © 2000 Miramax Film Corporation



DIRECTOR: SUN ZHOU  
STARRING: GONG LI, TONY LEUNG KA FAI

## Grave of the Fireflies

At once tragic and tender, *GotF* is among the most moving anti-war films of all time. It's an unflinching look at two children caught in the periphery of war, and an in-depth pry into the uncomfortable roil of human failings.

Miyazaki, is the master behind this film, and there are no dancing Totoros to relieve the unremitting heartbreak.

The story follows Seita and Setsuko, left to fend for themselves when their district is firebombed, killing their mother. It tracks the effects war can have on civilians – cruelty in harsh times, and children stealing to live. The relationship between Seita and Setsuko is the key point. Seita's struggles to keep his sister alive are almost too painful and his failure is the ultimate testament to futility. There are so many 'If-onlys' in this film it becomes unbearable to watch the characters' folly. Perhaps because we see the same potential in ourselves?

This film might lack the polish of some of Miyazaki's works, but it's an important addition to any anime library, for its depiction of human failure and human spirit.

**Fan Fact:** *GotF* is actually based on a semi-autobiographical book of the same name. Akiyuki Nosaka lost a sister the same way Seita lost Setsuko, and was guilt-stricken for decades after.

Michelle Starr

Michelle is an All-Purpose-Cultural-Catgirl in disguise.



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)

PRICE: \$29.95



## Heat Guy J

*Heat Guy J* follows the anime tradition of futuristic 'special units' fighting crime. In this unit there are three members: Kyoko – the boss, Daisuke – the laconic cop, and J – the superandroid (the only one allowed in Jiroh).

*HGJ* is delicious eye candy with a wonderful ambience: criminals have animal heads; beauty cards are collected; and the backgrounds are gorgeous. Nobuteru's character designs are excellent: with his steam-pumping pipes, J has a great mechanical feel and Daisuke is the epitome of a *bishounen* ('pretty boy').

However, *HGJ* suffers superficial storytelling – lumbering forward with sloppy exposition connecting the wicked set pieces (eg: J's leaf blower impersonation). We learn nothing about our leads and care little about them. It's the secondary characters we like. Clair Leonelli, the violent young Don ('Vampire') is a terribly fun villain. Yet, *HGJ* has potential to develop over the next three volumes and be stylish and satisfying.

Stuart M Willis & Alex Fry

Stuart & Alex both work in the film industry, which means they think they're cooler than they actually are.



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)

PRICE: \$29.95

## Final Fantasy Unlimited

*Final Fantasy Unlimited* follows young characters Ai and Yu on a quest to find their parents. They travel via subway (!) through the various worlds of Wonderland and are joined by Lisa, a powerful woman. Trying to stop these outsiders are the immortal warriors of the young Earl Tyrant.

Every episode, Ai, Yu and Lisa meet a man called Kaze. His mythology is intriguing and a good hook, especially as set up in the fourth episode. He's also damn cool when using the Magun despite it being repeated animation.

*FFU* borrows the cheesiest elements of the seminal RPGs: the chocobos, the midi music, and the big monsters. Each episode ends with a summoning reminiscent of the game, which gets dull quickly. And the stories are terribly erratic.

*FFU*'s strength is the worlds, which have more character than the characters.

They're weird in a good way. *FFU* is a Pokemon-ish cartoon with some interesting elements.

Stuart M Willis & Alex Fry



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)

PRICE: \$29.95

## Samurai Deeper Kyo

*SDK* is set in the popular period of Japanese history used by many samurai shows, the time around the battle of Sekigahara in the Edo period. This anime gains credibility by using real historical figures and events, but loses it when the figures start turning into demons and spitting acid. The historical element is mostly for show but the liner notes add some educational value. Our main protagonist is Kyo, a medicine seller who shares his body with an evil swordsman, also called Kyo. So Kyo has to be careful or Kyo will take over and Kyo won't be able to stop Kyo going on a murderous rampage. They could have just called one of them Bob. Samurai Deeper Bob, maybe. Despite this confusion, this is a pretty well-done fighting anime with some nice historical notes in the booklet, and plenty of swords and demons to spice it up.

Jake Surman



DISTRIBUTOR: Media Blasters [www.mediablasters.com](http://www.mediablasters.com)

SUPPLIER: Kinokuniya, (02) 9262 7996

PRICE: \$52.16

## Millennium Actress

*Millennium Actress* tells the life story of fictitious screen legend Chiyoko Fujiwara through the eyes of a devoted fan. Her roles, mostly period drama, have placed her in every historical period from the Meiji Restoration to the present day. Interestingly, the events in Fujiwara's 20th century existence seem to run parallel with her onscreen life, transforming the unwavering search for her one true love into a richly decorated tapestry that dives between the literal and the metaphoric, blending the real with the imagined; and her biography becomes an allegory of Japan's history.

Helmed by *Perfect Blue* director Satoshi Kon, the complex romantic themes of *MA* aren't as compelling as they are courageous. One of the



early scenes in the film refers to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, which precluded the rape of Nanking, neither of which the Japanese are fond of discussing, much less acknowledging.

Happily, *MA* doesn't rely on the latest whiz-bang computer graphics to make its mark. The design and direction are sufficient in delivering a very smartly told story. However, like *Pulp Fiction* and *Memento*, after you've seen it once and figured out the narrative format, there isn't much reason to watch it again.

**Kevin Cheung**

Kevin has read all 32 volumes on Ranma 1/2



**SUPPLIER:** Kinokuniya, (02) 9262 7996  
**PRICE:** \$59.85 (import)

Kinokuniya

## His & Her Circumstances

If you ever wondered what the director of *Evangelion* got up to after finishing his epic, here's your answer: A high school romantic comedy. *HHS* (Karekano in Japan) is not a normal romance, naturally, and the touch of Hideaki Anno is easily detected in the first minutes of episode one. One of the most refreshing things about this series is that the two main characters actually become a couple early on rather than just hinting at a possibility of an eventual relationship like a lot of girl's comics. The first few episodes of Karekano are a frantic, non-stop sequence of events where there's hardly a moment when the screen isn't filled with text, action and dialogue. This is where a lot of the humour comes as the characters change from exaggerated super-deformed mode in comedic moments to detailed, manga-style mode for serious times. Despite the comedy, the characters feel real and their personalities grow nicely.

**Jake Surman**



**DISTRIBUTOR:** RightStuf [www.rightstuf.com](http://www.rightstuf.com)  
**SUPPLIER:** Kinokuniya, (02) 9262 7996  
**PRICE:** \$58.23

Kinokuniya

## Transformers the Movie

*TFTM* is still the greatest rock'n'roll adventure in the galaxy – it's the *Citizen Kane* of toyline launches.

Sure, it's so very '80s with a hair metal soundtrack, DiCola's exceptional proto-electronica score, cheesy dialogue, enjoyable 2D characters, Orson Welles in a b-grade movie, and monster planet-eating robots – but that's part of the fun.

*TFTM* begins with Megatron's big push against the Autobots – and this explosive opening stands alongside *Akira*'s in awesomeness. If you haven't seen it, the rest of the story should be a surprise.

The R4 is the 'international version' with the opening scroll. It's presented in its original aspect of 4:3. Sadly, the source material shows its age with noticeable film artefacts, but the sound is very good.



**DISTRIBUTOR:** Madman Entertainment [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$29.95

If you were ever a fan, *TFTM* is a must have.

**Stuart M Willis & Alex Fry**

**MADMAN.**

## Initial D Battle: 01

Part of the successful anime/manga/game licence, this DVD has episodes 1-3 in two versions: Import Classic (original video / Japanese audio) and Tricked Out ('enhanced' video / English audio).

I prefer the Classic for original voice acting and because the graphics make more sense. The drawings, storylines and characters are all good, but the highlights are the cars – some of the best cars in anime I've seen. Drift driving fans will enjoy

the story of Tak becoming the boy racer to beat after he tests his Dad's driving

knowledge and an old '86 Toyota against a Mazda RX-7 on his local hill, Mount Akina. But if you don't like cars, forget it.

**Dylan Griffiths**  
Dylan is a champion racer . . . on a console. But too young to drive in real life.



**DISTRIBUTOR:** Madman Entertainment [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$29.95

**MADMAN.**

## Last Exile – 01: First Move

*Last Exile* has everything an anime fan could ask for: epic battles, smart and snappy dialogue, retro-style steam-punk technology and a blend of 2D and 3D animation that Studio Gonzo, finally, appears to have got right.

Taking place mostly in the skies, Claus and Lavie are two talented young pilots from a working class town who get caught in the middle of a war between two countries.

While the enormous airships and their brigades of musketmen blast each other to kingdom come, Claus and Lavie find themselves having to take sides. They're essentially pilots-for-hire, but they have hearts of gold as well, so you know it means there'll be a lot of soul searching and good deeds as a contrast to the cold etiquette of war. To be frank, *LE* isn't much of a show without its computer-generated special



effects. There's even a scene in the third episode that looks uncannily similar to the Pod Race in *Star Wars Episode 1: The Phantom Menace*.

However, its likeable characters, grandiose music and attention to detail create the same unmistakeable synergy that made Studio Gonzo's other more notable work, *Blue Submarine No. 6* (reviewed in *Gaijin! Magazine V.01*), such a thing of beauty.

Kevin Cheung



MADMAN.

DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment  
PRICE: \$29.95

## King of Bandit: Jing

*King of Bandit: Jing* is just the ticket for a quick anime fix with self-contained stories never running longer than two or three episodes. Jing is your typical cool headed thief, wandering from city to city stealing the unstealable and generally saving the day. Our hero is accompanied on his adventures by his avian friend (and occasional weapon), Kir, and the girl of the episode. The strangest addition is Postino. Each episode he rides in on his motorbike, says a few mysterious sentences and rides away again. He has no relation to the plot, and wasn't in the Jing manga, so his presence is a mystery. Jing's unconventional methods create interesting twists, but the star for me is the world Jing inhabits. Full of unique details, this fantasy world is a delight for the eye. *King of Bandit: Jing* has a general appeal as it has action, comedy, stylish art and a distinct lack of annoying characters.

Jake Surman



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)  
PRICE: \$29.95



Komala Singh



DISTRIBUTOR: Media Blasters: [www.media-blasters.com](http://www.media-blasters.com)  
SUPPLIER: Kinokuniya  
PRICE: \$59.77, Region 1

## Neon Genesis Evangelion – Movie Collection

The two films mark the climactic finale of Gainax's seminal mecha series. Shinji, Asuka and Rei are three child pilots with the only means of fighting the Angels, an alien race that threatens to bring about a catastrophe that could wipe out humankind. After a recap on the events of the 26-episode TV series, these films depict the endgame played out between the fearsome Angels, Nerv's powerful Eva robots and the UN's relatively helpless troops. The hostilities bring humanity spiralling closer to a new genesis while another conflict of the psychological kind takes place within the minds of Shinji and Asuka.

Essential for fans of *NGE*'s angsty mech combat.

Kevin Cheung



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)  
PRICE: \$49.95



## Minipato (included in WXIII boxset)

A treat only hardcore Patlabor fans will love, *Minipato* is a parody of the Patlabor franchise formed by three episodes' of digital paper puppet theatre. Written by Mamoru Oshii and directed by Kenji Kamiyama, *Minipato* provides detailed accounts of the design and research that went into the creation of the Patlabor robots. The toy industry-driven *Gundam* and *Evangelion* franchises get a good poking-at here, and there's even an explanation as to why earlier mecha designs like Mazinger could shoot their fists at their enemies. For something totally obscure, there's a curious story about how Special Vehicle Unit 2 kept itself out of financial strife. It's all delivered with *Excel Saga*-style rapid-fire dialogue, which is best listened to in the original Japanese language track. Apart from a bizarre tutorial on bullets and ballistics, *Minipato* is quite superfluous. It's just as well it's only available as a bonus with the *WXIII* Limited Edition DVD. The *Minipato* DVD also comes with supplemental material for *WXIII* including two behind-the-scenes docos that offer pre-production footage and interviews with the cast and crew, as well as the standard round of images.

Kevin Cheung



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)  
PRICE: \$49.95 (included in WXIII boxset)



MADMAN

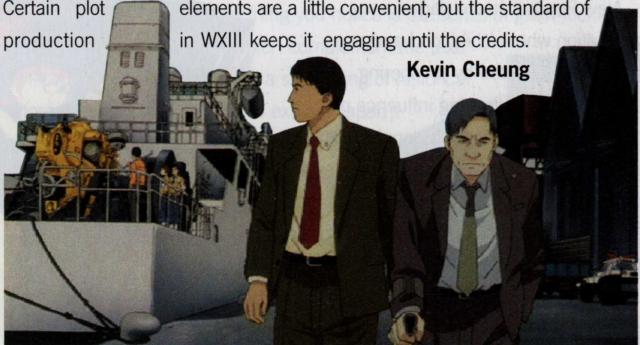
## WXIII:Patlabor Movie 3 Special Edition

A gumshoe story at heart, *WXIII* takes place in the near-future world of Patlabor. Unlike the first two films, audiences are taken away from the daily routines of the gang at Special Vehicle Unit 2 and into the lives of Hata and Kusumi, detectives investigating some fatal Labor accidents.

With fantastic computer-generated effects and brilliant surround sound, *WXIII* is a Patlabor fan's dream come true. The attention to detail in every frame is matched only by the complexity of the characters. Hata and Kusumi are a joy to watch as they play out their classic *kohai-sempai* roles.

The conclusion is unexpected: the detective story suddenly turns into a gruesome alien flick as the root of the mystery turns out to be a biologically engineered creature, *WXIII: Wasted Thirteen*. That's when the Patlabors of Special Vehicle Unit 2 are called in to neutralise the beast. Certain plot elements are a little convenient, but the standard of production in *WXIII* keeps it engaging until the credits.

Kevin Cheung



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)  
PRICE: \$49.95



MADMAN

## Martian Successor Nadesico The Motion Picture: Prince of Darkness

Some movies based on an existing series portray an alternate universe or fit in quite early in the timeline, but this is very much a sequel. As such, it's best viewed after you've seen the entire TV series lest you seriously spoil something for yourself. Plus you'll get the much-needed character and plot background to stop you from getting lost. You'll also appreciate the jump in animation quality that results from a movie-length feature having a higher budget.

Fan favourite Ruri Hoshino and eternal underdog Jun Aoi take centre stage in the movie, leading the charge against the rebel Martian Successors in the aftermath of the Great War.

The scenes in which the former crew of the Nadesico are asked to return are some of the most classic in the movie, mostly because you really remember what you felt for them when watching the series.

Overall the feature runs like a very long and well-animated TV episode, incorporating completely off-the-wall humour, personal drama, action-packed space and robot battles – and yet it still leaves things just a little open at the end. If you've already got or seen the whole TV series, you may well find some closure in the movie.

Komala Singh



DISTRIBUTOR: Madman Entertainment, [www.madman.com.au](http://www.madman.com.au)  
PRICE: \$30, Region 4



MADMAN

## FAKE (AWDVD-0093)

A relatively new development in the anime and manga scene is *yaoi*, which prominently features male/male relationships but is produced for a female audience. As any fan of the genre knows, it's not too easy to find *yaoi* anime and it's even less likely to see it in English.

First off, *Fake* requires major suspension of disbelief. The main characters, Dee and Ryo, are New York City cops. They're good-looking, they fancy each other, nobody cares and everybody's speaking Japanese anyway.

Being based on a popular manga series, this OAV covers a single story arc from it – which is both a blessing and a curse.

While you can pick up who the characters are and their dynamic from just watching the anime, it's difficult to see *Fake* as anything other than plotless fluff without the background. If you've read this part of the manga, however, it's just cool to see it animated in a style that's faithful to the original, right down to the unresolved sexual tension (sorry, girls).

If you're looking for an introduction to the *yaoi* genre or consider yourself an expert but somehow haven't seen it yet, *Fake* is very much a classic.

Komala Singh



DISTRIBUTOR: Media Blasters, [www.media-blasters.com](http://www.media-blasters.com)  
SUPPLIER: Kinokuniya, (02) 9262 7996  
PRICE: \$43.43, Region 1



Kinokuniya

## REVIEWS

### The Japanese Experience – Inevitable

New Pop is an art movement that developed in Japan in the early 1990s, and this book centres around the artwork of eight of the original New Pop artists.

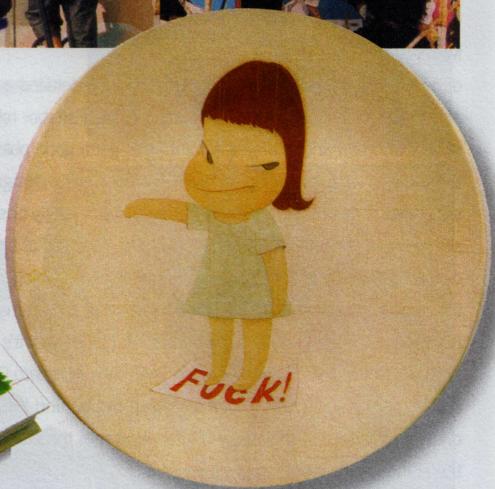
*The Japanese Experience – Inevitable* documents a farewell to the aesthetic cliché of old Japan that influences Western perception. New Pop takes the trivial, then adapts and manipulates it to create contemporary images.

New Pop artists are part of a generation whose childhood and youth were effected by prospering consumerism, a growing influence of the media, and American popular culture. Once melded with Japanese influences such as traditional artwork styles, manga and anime a new art form was developed with a distinctly Japanese style, yet a slightly Western flavour.

This book offers a wide selection of work from the New Pop movement, along with a commentary on its development within the Japanese art scene.

Melanie Farr

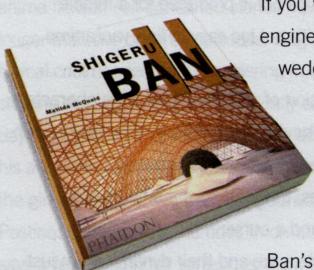
Melanie is the keeper of snacks and deadlines at *Gaijin! Mag.*



■ AUTHOR: MARGARET BREHM  
■ PUBLISHER: HATJE CANTZ  
■ SUPPLIER: KINOKUNIYA, (02) 9262 7996  
■ PRICE: \$46.90

Kinokuniya

### Shigeru Ban



If you were a designer married to an engineer, this book would be the perfect wedding gift for you both.

Based on the architectural works of Ban, it contains glossy pictures as well as specific technical details on the construction and materials used in many of his projects.

Ban's structures are constructed using organic materials such as paper tubes, bamboo and engineered wood. It is this innovative use of recycled and affordable materials that has won him praise from many humanitarians.

The book also highlights Shigeru Ban's ability to work across the style spectrum, from temporary housing for earthquake victims, to seaside villas, to contemporary public buildings such as the Nemunoki Children's Art Museum.

So far the most valuable book seen in this review section, and definitely one of the most stylish.

Melanie Farr



■ AUTHOR: MATILDA MCQUAID  
■ PUBLISHER: PHAIDON  
■ SUPPLIER: KINOKUNIYA, (02) 9262 7996  
■ PRICE: \$129.95

### X The Movie Animation Perfect Book

The characters used by all female studio Clamp and film director Rin-Taro seem to live in that typical manga world of dark, mysterious cities. Each character appears to possess that strange power, that inscrutable look in the eye that makes them both beautiful and bizarre.

In this book the characters are captured offscreen in ways you might not have seen them before. It shows early-stage, black and white sketches, characters undressed, and close-ups of movement, countenance, and clothing.

With this book, and enough practice, you can probably even create your own big-eyed, oddly-dressed character with a cool hairstyle and an air of mystery. Or perhaps they just seem mysterious to this *gaijin* because there's no English text in the book to explain it.

Claire Doble

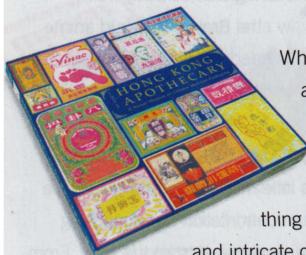
Claire is the goth geisha of *Gaijin! Mag.*



■ AUTHOR: RIN-TARO / CLAMP  
■ PUBLISHER: TSUGUHIKO KADOKAWA  
■ SUPPLIER: ANIME ANYTIME, WWW.ANIMEANYTIME.COM.AU  
■ PRICE: \$49.95

よろこんで Anime Anytime

## Hong Kong Apothecary



When Simon Go describes his book as a *visual history of Chinese medicine packaging*, he certainly isn't lying.

This book is chock full of imagery dating back to the Qing Dynasty. One thing is for sure, judging by the intense colours and intricate designs, if you fell sick back then, you'd be stuck browsing the shelves of the store for hours!

A veritable assortment of plasters, pellets, pills, powders, teas, oils and wines fill these pages. Each has a description of their different uses, and case studies on different family businesses who have been producing them through the ages. Sadly though, many of the original products aren't made anymore, making it more of a memoir of a disappearing culture, than a catalogue of what's available today.

But make sure to keep it away from your hypochondriac friends – they'll think they're dying!

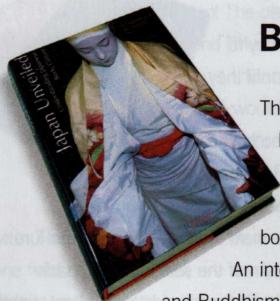
Melanie Farr



**AUTHOR:** SIMON GO  
**PUBLISHER:** PRINCETON ARCHITECTURAL PRESS  
**SUPPLIER:** KINOKUNIYA, (02) 9262 7996  
**PRICE:** \$61.95

Kinokuniya

## Japan Unveiled: Understanding Japanese Body Culture



This beautifully presented coffee-table book looks at 'the body' in Japanese culture. Samurai, sumo wrestlers, geisha, *kabuki* and *no* theatre performers all show their bodies in different public and private ways.

An interesting argument presented is that Shinto and Buddhism – the two main Japanese religions – rather than highlighting 'the body' as a separate entity, generally strive to assimilate it with nature and eradicate the concept of individual presence. In real life this idea can be seen in tradition: for example, the Japanese kimono is a universal and unisex garment that, when clothing the human form, conceals more than it reveals.

The book's simple and concise language, coupled with the gorgeous graphics, make it a joy to read.

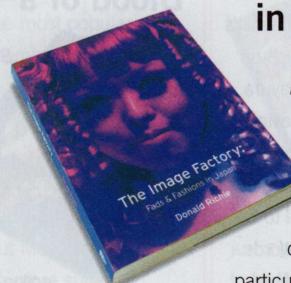
Claire Doble



**AUTHOR:** DOMINIQUE BUISSON  
**PUBLISHER:** HACHETTE  
**SUPPLIER:** KINOKUNIYA, (02) 9262 7996  
**PRICE:** \$89.94

Kinokuniya

## The Image Factory - Fads and Fashion in Japan



*Fads and Fashion in Japan* is an interesting, although at times pompous-sounding, study of Japanese society. Written by Donald Richie who, from the author bio, 'has lived in Tokyo for over 50 years', the book is less about any particular fad or fashion, and more about the concept of image as it relates to the Japanese psyche.

The first thing you notice is the series of great-looking colour photos in the book, which complement the text. With current observations and a smattering of historical information, Richie attempts to explain Japan's obsession with fads such as Tamagotchi, Hello Kitty, Karaoke, etc. The book covers: traditional dress, 'cute', sex, manga, *pachinko*, mobile phones and Japan's idea of 'foreign' as a fashion.

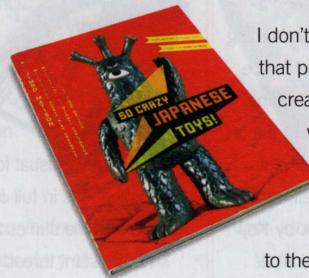
Claire Doble



**AUTHOR:** DONALD RICHIE  
**PHOTOGRAPHS:** ROY GARNER  
**PUBLISHER:** REAKTION BOOKS  
**SUPPLIER:** KINOKUNIYA, (02) 9262 7996  
**PRICE:** \$39.99

Kinokuniya

## So Crazy Japanese Toys!



I don't know who's crazier – the country that produced these toys or Jimbo Matisson, creator of *So Crazy Japanese Toys!* Either way, it's merchandising gone mad and you have to love it!

The book consists mostly of photos of whacky toys, from the mongoloid to the bizarre, which are all based on Japanese TV shows from the 1950s till today.

I liked the fact that they're all 'real' toys, with some bearing signs of playtime wear-and-tear. And the shag-pile carpet or psychedelic backdrops in many of the pictures is a nice touch.

Divided into sections – Men in Rubber, Rockin' Chicks, Cute 'n Cuddly, Motor Heroes and Freaky Foes – the flyleaf says, 'if your town is ever being trampled by a giant shrimp, you'll know just who to call'.

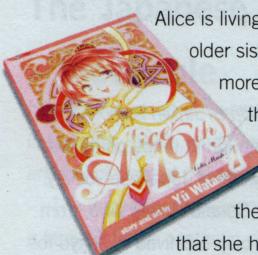
Claire Doble



**AUTHOR:** JIMBO MATISON  
**PUBLISHER:** CHRONICLE BOOKS  
**SUPPLIER:** KINOKUNIYA, (02) 9262 7996  
**PRICE:** \$45.00

Kinokuniya

## Alice 19th vol. 1



Alice is living in the shadow of her older sister Mayura, and what's more, she has a crush on the same boy Mayura does. After saving the life of a bunny in the street, Alice finds out that she has the potential to be the master of the magical Lotus Words.

Watase has willingly tried to steer away from the themes of her previous manga *Fushigi Yuugi*, *Ceres: Celestial Legend* and the result, while saccharine, is an entertaining read that's easy to get into. A welcome change in manga translation is the inclusion of the artist's 'free talk', usually a column on the side of one or two pages during the comic. It really gives you an insight into how Watase has developed things, from the story to the characters to the clothes they wear.

**Komala Singh**

Komala produces Moshi Moshi <http://moshi.pirotess.net>, an Australian zine for Japanese and Asian pop culture.

■ PUBLISHER: VIZ,  
WWW.VIZ.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$14.95



## The Ring vol. 1



Thriller manga is tricky to pull off right, as you need a combination of good timing and effective art to be successful. *The Ring* has good timing, but the art is a bit childish for a thriller plot.

The comic is a faithful retelling of the same story as the Japanese book by Koji Suzuki and original movie of the same name.

Reiko is a reporter who investigates rumours that four students all died one week after watching a cursed video tape. Reiko finds that the rumours are true, but not until she herself, and her young son, have seen the video. So begins a one-week race to figure out the mystery of the tape and reverse the curse before it kills her, her son and anyone else who watches the tape.

**Jake Surman**

Jake is a two metre tall anime and games fan who works in IT.

■ PUBLISHER: DARK HORSE,  
WWW.DARKHORSE.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$19.95



## Blade of the Immortal: Blood of a Thousand



*Blade of the Immortal* has always stood out as a unique manga title: the art style is more realistic than usual, the story is a perfect mix of action and emotion and the artist himself worked on reversing the page order.

It may be too gory for some, but fans of all things ninja and samurai will find *Blade* fascinating reading, with its feudal Japanese setting and Manji's incredible array of weaponry. Samura often leaves panels or entire pages in pencil, adding incredible texture to his already skilled artwork. The first volume collects the first six-issue series together, from the introduction of the immortal Manji to an almost humorous encounter with a master swordsman/painter.

**Komala Singh**

■ PUBLISHER: DARK HORSE,  
WWW.DARKHORSE.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$19.95



## Shirahime- Syo



Five short stories. Five tragedies. One Snow Princess watching over all... It's a Clamp HC so yes, it's more expensive than Tokyopop's smaller usual format, but it's well worth it.

The prologue is in full colour, the paper stock is superb and the stories are tragically enthralling.

The constant thread through the stories is the Snow Princess and the assistance or otherwise she provides to the people in the snow. A young girl hunts the wolf that killed her father. A hunter tries to survive the snow. An old man returns to his village to see if his love has waited for him. Shirahime- Syo brings the skills of Clamp – an all-female group of artists – to the fore. While they do cute very well, it's their tragedies that explore human nature and show what talents these women are.

**Kelly Foulstone**

■ PUBLISHER: TOKYOPOP,  
WWW.TOKYOPOP.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINOKUNIYA  
(02) 9262 7996  
■ PRICE: \$31.88



## Brain Powered vol. 1



Having steered away from the Brain Power(e)d anime myself, the manga was far more interesting than I'd counted on.

Though it could do with a little more background info, the dual retelling of a confrontation from opposing viewpoints was a great way to start the story. From there it develops into a combination of impending doom, improbable mecha battles and dysfunctional family drama that fans of *Evangelion* or *RahXephon* will appreciate.

It's a shame that the first pages couldn't be in colour, partly because Sugisaki is an amazing colourist and partly because it's impossible to figure out exactly what's happening on the pages in black and white. Apart from that, the art is incredibly appealing and detailed. And major points go to the hero for scoring two kisses by the end of the first volume!

**Komala Singh**

■ PUBLISHER: TOKYOPOP,  
WWW.TOKYOPOP.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$16.50



## Junko Mizuno's Princess Mermaid



They're cute. They're sexy. But wait until they turn on you...

Junko Mizuno is one of the few manga artists whose name guarantees a wild read.

*Princess Mermaid* has fishy women who lure men to the bottom of the sea for a gory hack-and-slash death. But mermaids have to eat, right? Our heroine longs for a return to the days when mermaids lived off clams and pleased men, not consumed them. She falls in love with a human boy whose family harvests mermaids for a living. Can she live happily ever after?

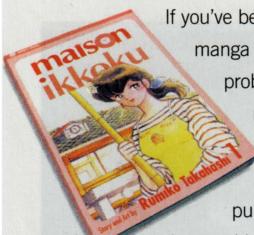
Mizuno's voluptuous, bare-breasted, full-colour heroines look amazing. But the soft paper stock – Mizuno's homage to American comics – dulls what would have otherwise been an exceptional book.

**Kelly Foulstone**

■ PUBLISHER: VIZ,  
WWW.VIZ.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINOKUNIYA  
(02) 9262 7996  
■ PRICE: \$24.98



## Maison Ikkoku vol. 1



If you've been reading translated manga for a while, you're probably aware of the massive back catalogue of Rumiko Takahashi's work that Viz has published. *Maison Ikkoku* is a could-be-romantic comedy and probably Takahashi's most 'normal' work, hearkening back to her short stories in the *Rumic Theater* and *Rumic World* collections.

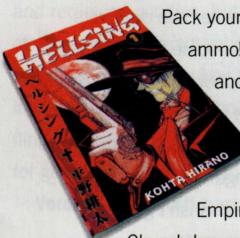
While it's typically frustrating to see Yusaku's continued uselessness in life and his neighbours' meddling in his affairs, the actual situations and misunderstandings that come up are still hilarious. Even the manager's dog fits in with the general wackiness of the apartment building that's the backdrop for the story and its namesake. If you're completely jaded with Takahashi manga, you may want to give this a miss, but read it if you'd like to see what preceded *Ranma 1/2* and *Inu Yasha*.

Komala Singh

■ PUBLISHER: VIZ,  
WWW.VIZ.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$19.95



## Hellsing vol. 1



Pack your knives, guns and ammo! The defence of Queen and Church has begun!

Monsters who would challenge the sovereignty of British Empire and Protestant

Church have a dynasty to contend with. The Hellsing Organisation, and its number one field agent, Alucard, are ready to dispatch threats in the most spectacular and violent way. But Alucard and his employers are perhaps a bigger mystery than the threats they face.

In his stylish red suit, and with countless cosplayers adopting his persona, Alucard is one of the genre's ice-cool anti-heroes. The interplay between him and his new protégé is great fun.

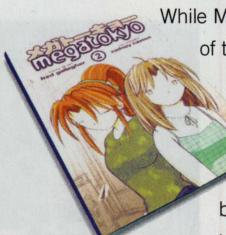
Like in *Blade of the Immortal*, part of *Hellsing's* enjoyment comes from what characters survive through, even as you flinch from the bloodshed.

Kelly Foulstone

■ PUBLISHER: DARK HORSE,  
WWW.DARKHORSE.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINOKUNIYA  
(02) 9262 7996  
■ PRICE: \$21.84



## Megatokyo vol. 2



While Megatokyo is one of the most popular comics on the internet, it's now also available in book form. It might seem strange to buy something you can get free online, but Megatokyo in particular is a comic much more suited to book format as it is a continuing story rather than individual gag strips. The big attractions of the paper version are its portability, the extra pages and bonus background story.

The main story follows Piro (the author) and his girl troubles, while the subplots involve his friend Largo and his tendency to blow things up then stomp them with a rented Godzilla. The references are mostly for anime and gaming fans, but the combination of shy romance and humour can be understood by anyone.

Jake Surman

■ PUBLISHER: DARK HORSE,  
WWW.DARKHORSE.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$13.95



## Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon vol. 5



Following the great success of the movie in the west, HK Comics has imported the manga version of the original *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* novel.

The events in vol. 5 occur before those in the movie, filling in the back-story of Jade Fox and Jen Wu. Jade Fox is a lot younger and a lot sexier than she appeared in the movie, but having the old maid from the movie using her feminine wiles to learn Kung Fu would be a bit of a stretch, I think.

Great attention has been placed on the art, drawn by Andy Seto in 100+ full colour pages. The Chinese feel to the drawings melds with the traditional style of the story to match the film, so if you enjoyed that, you'll like these comics.

Jake Surman

■ PUBLISHER: HKCOMICS,  
WWW.HKCOMICS.US  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$20.95



## Naruto vol. 2



Mix one fox demon into an innocent baby, jump 12 years and meet the irrepressible Naruto! And one of the coolest headbands around...

Naruto wants to be a ninja. Not just a good ninja, not just a great ninja – he wants to be the best ninja in his village and force all the villagers who made his childhood lonely to see him as their leader. Natuto's ego can be his undoing and it's as amusing watching him fail as succeed.

Part of the fun of reading a manga you've already seen as an anime is the way actor's voices pop into your head and enhance the characters. With or without the anime though, *Naruto* is a manga that stands on its own, luring you into what seems a simple coming-of-age ninja story but then surprising you with complex techniques and an interesting back-story.

Kelly Foulstone

■ PUBLISHER: VIZ,  
WWW.VIZ.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINOKUNIYA  
(02) 9262 7996  
■ PRICE: \$12.44



## Trigun vol. 1



*Trigun* is a western with a futuristic twist. Vash the Stampede is trailed by two insurance assessors called Meryl and Millie, who attempt to limit the property damage that just seems to follow Vash around wherever he goes.

Vash is a pacifist, but is extremely handy with a gun when he needs to be, which is quite often. Vash is also both the comic relief and the hero. Those who have seen the anime version will recognise the stories, but *Trigun* remains funny after many viewings. The plot progresses quickly, so after two volumes of the manga, new material appears which occurs after the end of the animated series. This manga represents pretty good value, as it's about twice as thick as most volumes, and is chock full of laughs and action.

Jake Surman

■ PUBLISHER: DARK HORSE,  
WWW.DARKHORSE.COM  
■ SUPPLIER: KINGS COMICS,  
WWW.KINGSCOMICS.COM  
■ PRICE: \$20.95



## Brave Soul



*Brave Soul* is a top title in the hugely popular *hentai* game category (or Adult dating-sim, if you like). And as expected, it's over the top, a little kinky and way pervy.

If you like that kind of thing, then you're not alone. Role playing seek-seduce-and-shag games have been so popular during recent decades they now account for a quarter of the total software market share in Japan!

This particular title is, fortunately for *gaijin hentai*, translated into English – the first Japanese full action dating-sim with English audio we've seen. The RPG adventuring is fairly standard wandering hero stuff, with tasks ranging from stealing treasures, to match making and returning a mage's remains to his widow. Succeed at these, and you'll head off as a hunter on wilder adventures through Valencia (who comes up with these names?) with your best mate Shell (a dragon!), and possible bed-mate Alicia. Along the way you'll meet more beautiful women, who might want to sleep with you if you succeed in all missions and score enough 'love points' to earn a 'love event'. It's mostly cheeky voyeuristic fun... but there's a catch.

As in all great tales of love and war, you have an arch-rival – in this case, a pretentious toff called Fredrick Ampholtes Cobden. Beat him and you'll get the happy ending you hoped for.

**Verdict:** Driven by one of the most basic desires for success, you'll probably play this one straight through.

Stuart Ridley

■ PLATFORM: PC  
■ WEB: [www.jlist.com](http://www.jlist.com)

WARNING: Rated R (nudity/sex)

## Final Fantasy X-2



It's that time of year again and we have another *Final Fantasy* game hitting our shores. For the first time in its 15-year legacy, however, we have a 'true' sequel to its predecessor which carries the plot, characters and the world of *Final Fantasy X*'s Spira into a brand new adventure.

High-summoner Yuna and cousin Rikku are back, joined by new angry-femme, Paine. Yuna's looking for answers after she discovers a sphere showing what looks to be, *FFX*'s Tidus in some kind of trouble. So begins the main plot as the trio – part of the sphere hunting Gullwings – scour the newly liberated world of Spira. Yuna's innocence has been sexed-up hot pants-style, causing some controversy among fans, but it fits with the game's themes of rebirth and change.

From the opening pop concert FMV, you know this isn't going to share the same melancholic vibe of *FFX*. You're given free-roam over Spira almost immediately, which puts you straight into the massive amount of optional questing and mini-gaming. Through the handy use of Hotspots, which indicate areas with vital information, the main plot isn't too hard to pick up after long side-questing sojourns. Character abilities revolve around the strategic use of Dresspheres and Garment Grids which, along with providing a change in outfit, grant new jobs and skills. Combat has been given an overhaul, which allows for interrupts and intense combos when timed accurately.

On the downside, the relaxed, free-form tone and less-than-urgent plot makes you feel like your actions aren't as relevant as the dramatic importance of a save-the-world campaign. Furthermore, while the game is massive and there is lots to do, it still feels too much like an expansion.

**Verdict:** For the first time *Final Fantasy* fans can revisit characters and a world they've loved, even if it can't match the heights of its predecessor.

David Kidd

■ PLATFORM: PS2  
■ WEB: [www.square-enix-usa.com/games/FFX-2/](http://www.square-enix-usa.com/games/FFX-2/)

## I-Ninja



Ninja are cool, but super futuristic robot fighting ninja kick arse. Namco's I-Ninja is a fast and funky platformer in which you play a pint sized cyber ninja on the trail of lost 'Rage' stones, stolen by the evil Master O-Dor and his Army of Ranx.

Guided by the ghost of the *sensei*, your squat little ninja kicks arse through a rolling series of mini-levels leading up to inevitable boss fights. These levels are predominately focused on kicking evil robot ninja butt and retrieving goodies, but there are healthy doses of other fun types of weirdness like giant robot boxing.

Fun and fast is the key to I-Ninja, thanks to the breaking of the game into little chunks o' gameplay. We always suspected that being a *shuriken* flinging, *katana* twirling ninja of the future would be fun. Thanks Namco for giving us the chance to live out our dreams.

**Verdict:** Cartoonish heaven for ninja lovers everywhere.

John Gillooly

■ PLATFORM: PS2  
■ WEB: [www.ininjagame.com](http://www.ininjagame.com)

## SNEAK PREVIEW:

### Onimusha & Nightmare Before Christmas

Tim Burton and Jean Reno are names that are well known to filmgoers, but soon they will stamp their names on the gaming world. Capcom is currently producing a game based upon Tim Burton's cult classic animated movie,



## Mario Party 5



Obviously this one is aimed at kids, but if you like the world of Mario you might want to check it out for some easy play with classic Nintendo characters such as Mario (of course!), Donkey Kong, Princess Peach and Luigi, along with some of the newer characters (now my favourites on *Mario Kart*) like baby Bowser, Walluigi and Daisy.

When you have several hours free and a bunch of friends to entertain you'll find enough challenges for everyone in the 150 minigames accessed through various play modes, including: Party, Bonus, Story, Super Duel and Mini Game. The boardgame map is cute, but forces you to wait your turn.

If you're on your own, head to Story mode, where you'll find Bowser and his mini-me-like Baby Bowser in a dream world determined to ruin other people's dreams – and make Bowser's dream come true. You'll have to experience Bowser's evil dream for yourself... while working out what to do with Baby Bowser, who can split in three!

After that, play with some humans in Super Duel (fighting robots!) or Party mode, because human players are more fun. And you'll develop important social skills, or something. The Battle Royale in this mode is a total free-for-all, and just like the movie, there's only meant to be one winner. If you can't hack it, maybe you should play the Team Battle.

Party and Story modes then unlock lots of games in Mini Game mode, and my favourite games in Bonus mode: ice hockey and beach volleyball.

It all looks very cute, if a little same-same-but-different. Definitely one for fulltime Mario fans and younger players.

**Verdict:** Aimed at younger Mario fans, it's an easy game worth firing up for a laugh when you have friends over.

Dylan Griffiths

■ PLATFORM: NINTENDO GAME CUBE  
■ WEB: [www.nintendo.com.au](http://www.nintendo.com.au)

*The Nightmare Before Christmas*, which has a huge following in Japan.

It is also producing the third game in its successful Onimusha series. Taking place in both feudal Japan and modern day France, it features French actor Jean Reno and Japanese star Takeshi Kaneshiro as the two main protagonists.

John Gillooly





## PHAT FUSION: INTERVIEW WITH GANGSTA RAPPERS TOO PHAT

THE HIP HOP INVASION OF NORTH ASIA HAS BEEN HAPPENING FOR YONKS, BUT HAS ANYBODY NOTICED ITS RECENT EXPLOSION IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA? LUI YU MING LOOKS AT WHAT'S GOING ON AND TALKS TO JOE FLIZZOW FROM MALAYSIA'S BIGGEST HIP HOP ACT, TOO PHAT, ABOUT THEIR MUSIC, JAY-Z AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING REAL.

**H**ip hop has travelled eastwards from the ghettos in New York and LA to the Asian music scene. While gangsta rap evolved from the bowels of the streets to MTV as a popular music genre in the States, hip hop in Asia kicked off as a fashion trend that quickly seeped into the local music heartbeat. Baseball caps and baggy clothes were considered cool and different by youths, and hip hop in North Asian nations imitated the bling-hos-guns imagery in American rap, but this appeal was short-lived.

It was really the second wave of Asian rap groups that made hip hop part of their pop culture rather than a passing fad. Some detractors may jeer at the mellower beats and rhymes of Asian hip hop, as compared to the beefed up aggression of 50 Cent or Eminem, but it's because Asians don't experience the same kind of ghetto violence as their American peers. Hong Kong's LMF, Japan's Rip Slyme, Korea's j.t.L. and Taiwan's Machi put their own spin on hip hop, incorporating cultural elements and lyrics that relate more to their own realities.

## Hip hop goes over ground in Asia

Hip hop only gained momentum in South-East Asia in the late '90s. American hip hop music was huge in this part of the world since the '80s but there were only a handful of rappers who seriously made it a career. The scene was underground for most of the last decade, but thanks to groups like Indonesia's Bagindo, P-Squad, N'Dru, the Philippines' DJ Rhyme, C-4, Singapore's Urban Xchange and Malaysia's Too Phat, Ruffedge, Soulstreet and Innuendo, people are finally sitting up and paying attention to the local hip hop scene. The music can now be heard everywhere: on radio, TV and in clubs.

## Too Phat for KL

**Gajjin!** caught up with Kuala Lumpur-based rap duo Too Phat to find out about what makes Malaysian hip hop tick. Johan Ishak, aka Joe Flizzow, 26, and 24-year-old Malique Ibrahim met in an internet chatroom in their late teens. Their passion for rapping pushed them to make their own music. Hip hop producer Illegal played their demo to Ahmad Izham, the managing director of indie label Positive Tone, an English recording branch of EMI Malaysia. The Too Phat sound blew him away: 'I've never heard hip hop like this!' Positive Tone gave Joe and Malique the dollars and cents to put out their smash debut, *Whuttadilly?*.

The bouncy break beats of Too Phat are radio friendly but the phenomenal impact of their music lies in their lyrical wit and the seamless blend of traditional Malay music and hip hop beats. Too Phat lace their rap with *dikir barat*, a type of Malay choral singing that is accompanied by hand gestures, gongs and *rebanas* (handheld drums). Their music is an authentic representation of Malaysian hip hop as their albums always feature a slew of fellow Malaysian acts and their samples.

This kicked off a Too Phat craze in their home country that quickly spread beyond Malaysian borders with the release of two more albums *Plan B* and *360°*. Their last single *Just A Lil' Bit* features Warren G, G-Funk pioneer and hip hop icon which got them international recognition. Now, Too Phat has a huge following in Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines.

**More info >** Too Phat on the EMI/Positive Tone label [www.toophat.com.my](http://www.toophat.com.my)



**AUTHOR: LUI YU MING**

Lui Yu Ming is the Associate Editor of Soundbuzz.com in Singapore. She seems too sweet to be mixing it with gangsta rappers and psycho punks, but hey, we're not complaining!

**Gajjin!** : How has Too Phat contributed to the face of Malaysian music and youth culture?

**Joe:** I think we've managed to bring hip hop to a new level. It's a whole lot bigger since we started. Back then everything was done underground – there was no support from authorities and sponsors. We were doing small time gigs in KL for a couple of years and the scene just grew from there. Now hip hop is widespread and the other elements such as breaking and DJ-ing have also blown up. I'm not saying we single handedly did this but I'm proud to say that we were a part of the growth of hip hop.

**Gajjin!** : What do you think about the present Malaysian music scene?

**Joe:** I think the scene is pretty healthy. We've got a lot of talented groups and individuals out there, and these days, the support is better. I'm not just talking about rap groups, but also bands, artists, filmmakers, DJs etc.

**Gajjin!** : Is there anything you'd like to see changed?

**Joe:** It'd be good to have more events that could get all these acts together. This would encourage unity within the urban scene and not limit everybody to just the genre of music or line they're into.

**Gajjin!** : What makes Too Phat different from other hip hop acts?

**Joe:** I don't think we're that different. We just represent where we're from and try to incorporate our culture into our music. A lot of people know us for using traditional elements in our music. Some people see it as a gimmick but there's more to Too Phat than that. We're also a serious hip hop group that pays as much attention towards our rhymes and production.

**Gajjin!** : Who do you admire?

**Joe:** From a rapper's point of view, I've always respected Jay-Z. I got

his first album in '96, and I was just hooked. His lyrics are tight and he knows how to make hits. From a business point of view, what he has achieved with Roccafell Records and Roccawear clothing line proves that there's no limit to where hip hop can take you.

**Gajjin!** : What are you listening to now?

**Joe:** A whole bunch of new stuff, like Kanye West, Outkast, plus some old CDs: The Roots, Things Fall Apart, A Tribe Called Quest and Midnight Marauders.

**Gajjin!** : Who are your musical influences?

**Joe:** Malaysian legend P. Ramlee, Notorious B.I.G., Big L, Jay-Z, Nas, Wu Tang.

**Gajjin!** : Hip hop talks a lot about 'bling'. How important is this image to the music for you?

**Joe:** I think it's important to be real. If you're living the whole bling bling lifestyle, and you wanna floss, then I could understand. If I was making millions I'd probably have 23-inch rims and hundred thousand dollar platinum chains. I think here in Asia, or Malaysia at least, it's not the case, so naturally it doesn't become a subject in our songs or videos.

**Gajjin!** : What inspires the Too Phat sound?

**Joe:** Life, television, movies, old records, MTV, books, sounds... everything I guess.

**Gajjin!** : What would be a dream collaboration for you guys?

**Joe:** Jay-Z!

**Gajjin!** : What are the three words that would best describe Too Phat?

**Joe:** Off the hook.

**Gajjin!** : What's lined up for 2004?

**Joe:** A new album, hopefully more international collabos, and many more shows...

# LA HAINÉ VS ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION

**Myer Music Bowl, Melbourne 20 January**

**La Haine (MA), directed by Matthieu Kassovitz with live performance by Asian Dub Foundation**

Since its Camera d'or winning debut in 1995, *La Haine* – Matthieu Kassovitz's utterly compelling depiction of three friends of differing ethnicity struggling in the tenements of Paris's outer fringe – has become something of a socio-cultural landmark in Europe.

Asian Dub Foundation composed a new score for live accompaniment of the film in 2003 as part of the David Bowie-curated Meltdown Festival in the UK. Ever intrigued by the marriage of celluloid and live audio, I wanted to see if *La Haine*'s inherent tension and the restless dynamics of ADF's



pluralistic approach to modern dub, hip hop and drum n bass would be a sensory overload or just overpowering.

*La Haine*'s visuals are enough without the aural overdose of an ADF gig, but ADF's considerable physical presence was subsumed by the sheer juggernaut of Kassovitz's black and white *tour de force* of urban alienation.

ADF don't appraise dub as a deconstruction process but as a system, or indeed a 'foundation' to rhythms. ADF's 're-imagining' (their phrase) of *La Haine* is a genuine score with a sensitivity to nuance, not overly relying on adrenalised loops and fretboard histrionics, despite moments of momentous power. It's a thoroughly prepared set of musical chapters, specifically designed to complement the volatile ebb and flow of Kassovitz's film. ADF know that within silence lies tension; and in the natural amphitheatre of the Music Bowl, the atmosphere was razor sharp.

As the protagonists stroll through downtown Paris to meet a drug dealer – the score is minimal; threatening, and dangerous – but it leaves the film to breathe; even if the audience can't. The effect is exhausting, crushing, and utterly stunning.

**Jonathan Alley**

Jonathan broadcasts 'Tough Culture' Tuesdays 4pm at [www.rrr.org.au](http://www.rrr.org.au). For a dubhead, he's crap at bass.

## Essential Asian Flavas vol. 3



It says on the box here, you're hearing a showcase of new and exclusives... Well I don't mean to boast but I've already heard the Calibre mix of

Badmarsh and Shiri's *Sigis*. It's dnb ruffness just too damn good not to include here.

*Essential Flavas 3* is an insightful Eastern journey also featuring 'so hot right now' contributors such as desi-funkster Rishi Rich and Tigerstyle, down with Bikram Singh's Punjabi bounce. As the Asian underground tag suggests, these are Asian artists based in Western cities, and the contemporary influences rub up nicely. Just check the b-line hip hop of Navdeep's *My Technique*, the sitar led breaks of Jon Kennedy's *East is East* and the Bristolian vibe to White O's *Asian girl*. Bound to be playing now in bars all over Old Street.

**Xy-Clone**

Xy-Clone is an Australian electronic artist whose own album is due mid-2004.

**ARTIST:** VARIOUS  
**LABEL:** OUTCASTE

## Elementary Vibes vol. 5: This is the Winter of our Discoteque



Local flavas are compiled neatly on this fifth instalment of the EV series. Our very own tastemakers down at Vibes mark most of the field, with Ubin's high

rotation single *Red Room* kicking things off. 2up's oz hip-hop makes way for the superior phat funk of Koolism's *Adrenalin*. Quintessentially Maya Jupiter delivers the street savvy, *Try'na Bust*, before another of our best, Quro is joined by Mostyn and Jeremy Glover on *No way to Live*.

Current heroes The Bird contribute two album highlights in the form of *Inner Peace*, and *Zindagi* featuring tabla master Bobby Singh. All India Radio vs Don Meers, bring the beatless minimal oddity, *Eyes Ahead*, *Don't turn Around* before the album slides comfortably into restful downtempo and leftfield. Nice.

**Xy-Clone**

**ARTIST:** VARIOUS  
**LABEL:** CREATIVE VIBES

## Tales From Beyond the Groove



The debut from the Limp Twins brings with it enough funk, upbeat soul and lyrical wonder to make it a staple around your house for months.

William 'Quantic

Soul Orchestra' Holland on bass, guitar, sax and production duties is joined by the all singing/key playing Russel Porter. A vintage organ riff from the opening title track instantly lightens the mood, before the limps roll out the infectious funk of *The Limping Song* and previous single, *Living Well*. There's also the Jamaican bent to *The Dub that Sank my Sub*, a little more indie swagger for *Moving closer to the Sofa*, and some '70s horn for *Another Day in the life of Mr Jones*.

Clearly the result of two lives spent almost entirely around music.

**Xy-Clone**

**ARTIST:** THE LIMP TWINS  
**LABEL:** TRU THOUGHTS

## Flower Talk



With flowers as the running theme, Candy Lo Hau Yum plants a garden of musical delights with *Flower Talk*, her ninth Cantonese album to date. Starting subtly with

a soothing piano solo, she launches into the first song, *Up-side Down Rose* which centres on the love/hate relationship of two lovers with lyrics of jaded and bitter breakups and all the elements that reinstalls her hard rock chick roots.

Produced by her longtime music partner Mark Lui, *Flower Talk* is split into four sections each with its own distinct feel. Lo even pens some of the tracks including the first single, *Flower Falls – Flower Blossoms* and *Black Lily*. This being her first attempt at songwriting, her potential shines through, but her songs are still lacklustre at best. With Hong Kong radio adding *Up-side Down Rose* to their playlists, Candy's latest effort will definitely help diversify the musical palette in Hong Kong, with Candy leading the way for HK women in rock.

### Donovan Cheung

Donovan works in the comics industry as a graphic artist. He loves pop music, obviously.

**ARTIST:** CANDY LO  
**LABEL:** SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT (HK)  
[WWW.SONYMUSIC.COM.HK/CANDY/MAIN.HTML](http://WWW.SONYMUSIC.COM.HK/CANDY/MAIN.HTML)

## To Love



Bringing a completely different style to the table than the current bland pop that the Chinese market has succumbed to, *To Love* from Faye

Wong is her latest offering after splitting from longtime label Cinepoly for Sony. Wong has been gathering material for this release for over two years, producing and writing her strongest tracks both musically and (potentially) for commercial success.

*To Love* is the first single off the album of the same name and carries a more alternate rock feel than previous albums – 1999's *Love Only Strangers* was very Bjork-ish vocally and lyrically. Her vocals are dominant and the arrangement is a solid mix of rock, electronica, and trip-pop (along the lines of Goldfrapp.) Mellow vocals mixed with strange lyrics (just wait till you hear how Wong uses the sound of her breath as an instrument), this avant-garde creation will not disappoint. Be sure to listen up for *Empty City* and *Beautiful Mistake*.

### Donovan Cheung

**ARTIST:** FAYE WONG  
**LABEL:** SONY MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT (HK)  
[WWW.SONYMUSIC.COM.HK/CANDY/MAIN.HTML](http://WWW.SONYMUSIC.COM.HK/CANDY/MAIN.HTML)



## Htm Tiartrop Fles

Peering defiantly at you between one's legs is kinda kinky for striking a pose. One glance and you know that this is no manufactured J-Pop starlet.

Going simply by the name hitomi, this artist has been around for longer than both Ayumi and Utada. And she is basically regarded as the definitive indie rock chick in the J-Pop scene.

She was originally spotted and picked up by J-Pop guru Tetsuya Komuro in 1994. Komuro is Japan's answer to Stock, Aitken and Waterman. Then hitomi broke away in 1995 to write rock songs that gave her street cred which went beyond just her minxy good looks and quirky style.

*Htm Tiartrop Fles* is hitomi's ninth album. Opening with the infamous 'whoo-whoo' riff from the Stones' *Sympathy For The Devil* in *Fighting Girl*, hitomi amps up the tempo with frantic drum n bass and electronic bleeps and warps.

*Blade Runner* creeps in with a menacing cyber intro that flips into a heavy punk number *a la* Courtney Love. hitomi weaves the mysterious Indian sitar with breezy guitar riffs in *Eien Toiu Category*. Think Bollywood and *California Dreaming*. If things don't get crazy enough, part soul house part Weezer track *La Plus Belle Pour Aller Danse* shimmies along with Dee-lite boogie sample *Groove Is In The Heart*.

hitomi unabashedly raids the past and then goes on to mix it with some of the drama of J-Pop. She delivers up a heady musical cocktail for your enjoyment – shaken but not stirred.

### Lui Yu Ming

**ARTIST:** HITOMI  
**LABEL:** AVEX, AVEXNET.OR.JP/HITOMI



## Frontiers

With guitars ablaze, the new shoguns of glam rock have landed in Japan to shake things up. Called Psycho Le Cemu, they look like renegades who just jumped out of an anime flick. Frontman Lida (guitar) leads the pack that includes Ava (dance/guitar), Daishi (vocals), Seek (bass) and Yura (drums).

**ARTIST:** PSYCHO LE CEMU  
**LABEL:** NIPPON CROWN, [WWW.PSYCHOLECEMU.JP](http://WWW.PSYCHOLECEMU.JP)

Their bizarre togs and tunes are an absolute riot – basically an ultra insane hybrid of Aqua and Metallica.

Their first single *Roman Hikou* harks back to the era of keyboard ties. Waterfalls of '80s pop fizz, synth reverbs and echoes of 'woah-ohs' makes this a blithe dance number. *Gekiai Merry Go Round* puts Linkin Park to shame in a glorious rock piece that swings from thumping techno beats to soaring guitars to gangsta rap. Plundering Madonna's *La Isla Bonita*, the track *VISITOR* tangos to Latino beats and soaring Santana-like guitar solos. And *Mind Core* is intense heavy metal, Daishi's staticised rap vocals almost incoherent above the frenzied bass screech.

These guys are really about pure rock 'n' roll. Completely refreshing in the J-Rock world where everyone's tearing their souls apart.

### Lui Yu Ming

## Can't Hold Us Down (featuring Lil' Kim)



Well, I got to put one of these in now don't I? Just like the Madonna one last time (which has been selling loads in the stores), Christina (or Xtina as pop kiddies and her label like to call her) has gone East side for her remix treatment.

The reason you've got another remix like this acutally worth listening to is thanks to how the tablas have been treated. Completely digitised and made to sound like something out of an early '80s drum machine, they slide neatly over a rigid dance hall groove to make a minimal yet driving tune.

Head straight for the instrumental, where this tune is much like Timbaland (Missy Elliot's beat master) with its jerky yet funk-derived groove rather than the slick Neptunes style of Rishi Rich's Madonna remix. On the dub we have some very neat, floating vocal edits that help to push the driving riddim along and lock you into a false sense of security.

Again, something to check for its uniqueness, especially since it's another major label release that is absolutely full of flava.

Ritual

**ARTIST:** CHRISTINA AGUILERA  
**LABEL:** RCA/BMG

## Still Doin' it



What's it all about? Two Indian boys in Sydney sitting in their bedrooms and producing have a chance meeting with drum n bass Don (and, I would think it would be fair to say, a man they greatly admired) LTJ Bukem. The ensuing conversation gets the crew, now known as Vice Versa 7, signings to Good Looking Records. WOW...

Definitely a fairy tale.

So does the music hold it down? Well, it delivers by taking obvious DJ Premier inspirations (production king from Gangstarr) and adding an amazing sliding funk bass line that drives the tune for its entire running time of nine (!?) minutes.

Little vocal edits really give that 'Premier' vibe. This is a tune that's full of 'vibe', for lack of a better word, that simply kills it for any hot summer Saturday (or night or morning).

Simple but effective liquid drums and some of the best placement of samples you'll ever hear in a drum n bass tune (or any tune for that matter) all complement the infectious bass line. Killa no matter where it's from.

Ritual

**ARTIST:** VICE VERSA  
**LABEL:** LOOKING GOOD RECORDS

## Soundz of the Asian Underground



A powerful statement about East/West fusion in music fuelled by the engine that is Talvin Singh, this album fuses electronic technology, the uniquely English sounds of drum n bass and break beat, with Indian sonic soundscapes to create a remarkable link between things that seemed worlds apart.

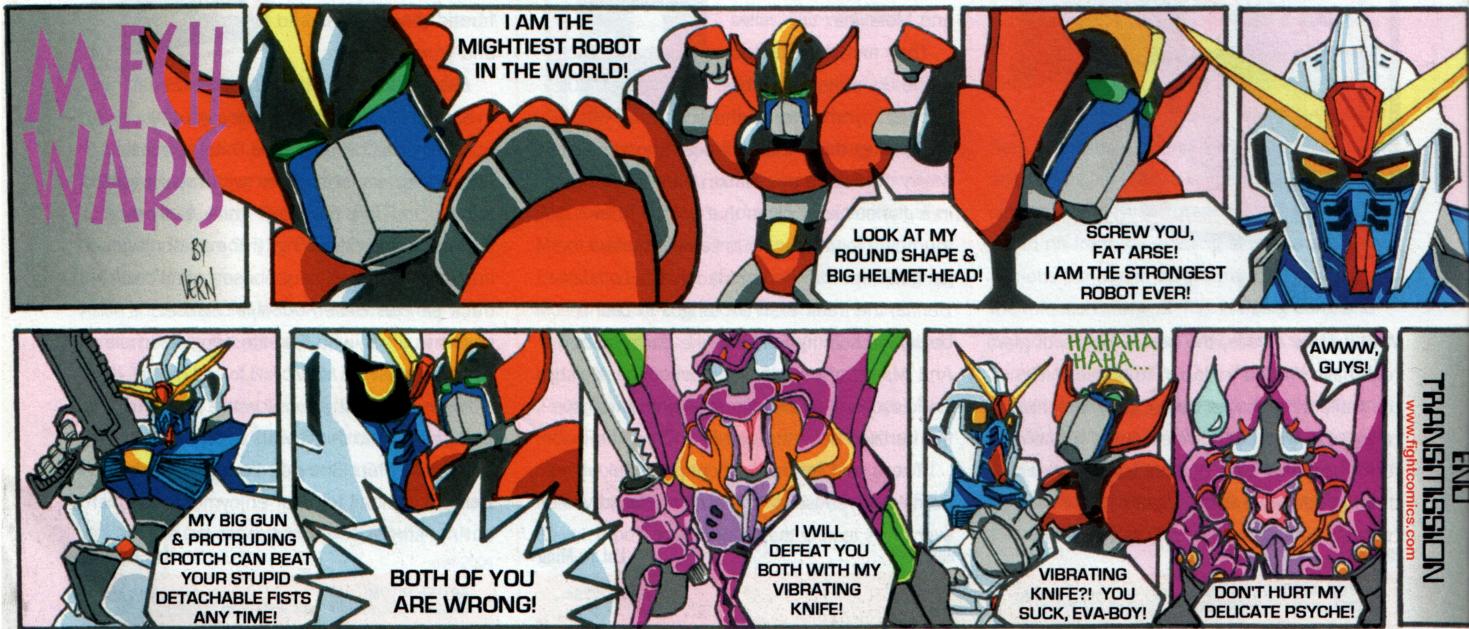
Opening with the beautifully daunting *Jaan*, this compilation draws you into the unknown, with sweet ethnic vocals and delicate yet frantic drums. At times it almost parodies the concept of 'East Westercism' via State Of Bengal's introduction to *Flight IC408* where an Indian Airlines hostess beckons you to enjoy your flight.

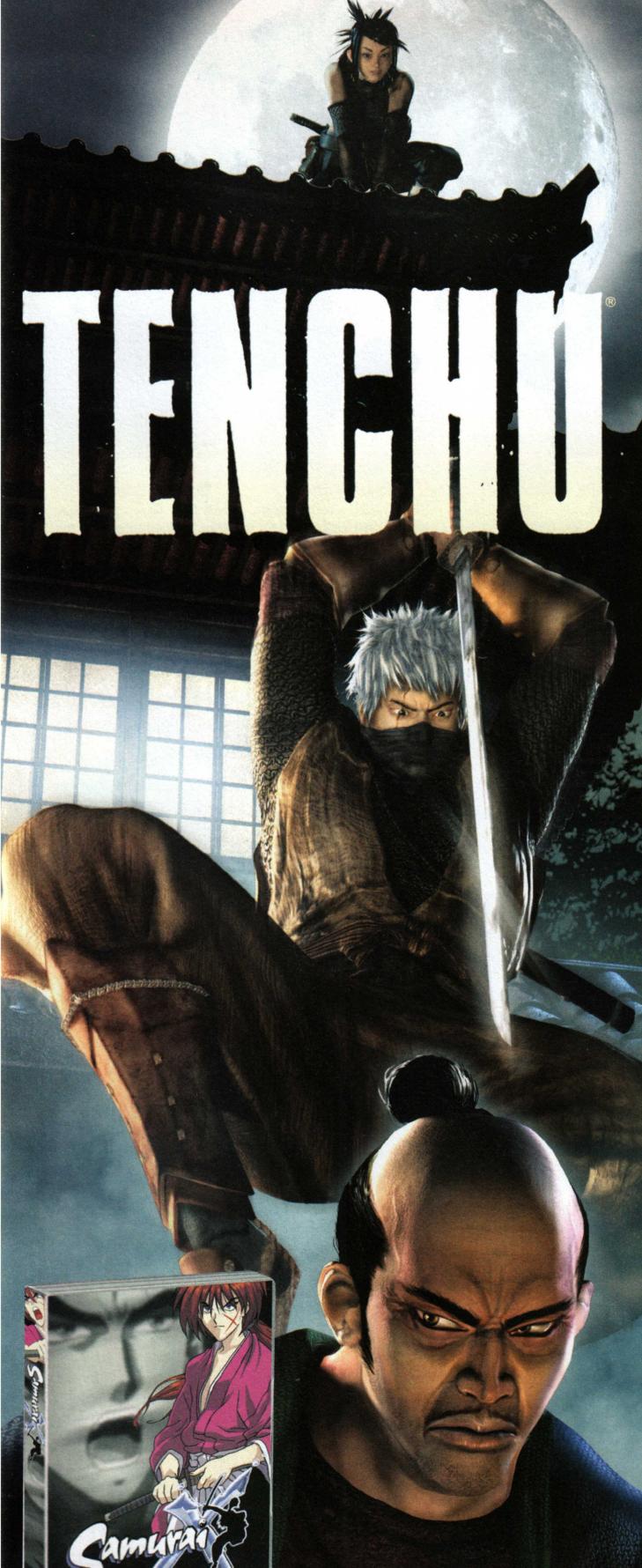
AR Rahman's epic *Mumbai Theme* tune makes you fall in love with its beatless, stringed composition whilst Osmani soundz *Spiritual Master Key* is pure badness done in a way that makes it as fresh today as ever.

This album really gave a lot of people a voice due to the way it was created. Asian music for Asians, by Asians but done in a way that people from many walks of life could absorb it. I realise this one's old but if you missed out on it in the past, check it; otherwise, pull it out and re-listen.

Ritual

**ARTIST:** ANOKHA  
**LABEL:** ISLAND/POLYGRAM





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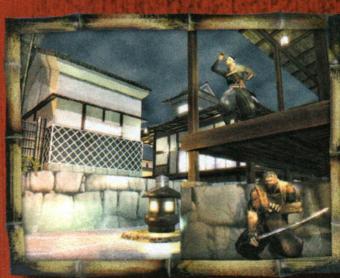
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## REVIEWS



### 1 Transformers G1: Inferno

**SUPPLIER:** Toys 'R' Us  
[www.toysrus.com.au](http://www.toysrus.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$69.95

The classic Transformers are available again in a retro-G1 re-release, including this guy, Inferno, the fire truck one. Inferno has an authentic retro feel, right down to the sticker you can rub to reveal an Autobot logo.

### 2 Micropets Mickey

**SUPPLIER:** Toys 'R' Us  
[www.toysrus.com.au](http://www.toysrus.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$9.99

Don't be scared off by the Disney tag – your inner robot freak will love Mickey! We shall call him... Mini-Mickey. He understands five action commands and emits cute buzzy-clicky noises whenever we ask him to attack.

### 3 Bruce Lee Kubrick

**SUPPLIER:** Morning Glory  
[www.morningglory.com.au](http://www.morningglory.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$15

The chin-strokers reckon Bruce's *Game of Death* tracksuit could have been more finely detailed, (like, the black stripes should be thicker) but no matter, with nunchaku ready, he totally looks poised to kick nerdy boy arse.

### 4 BAPE Be@rbrick

**SUPPLIER:** Morning Glory  
[www.morningglory.com.au](http://www.morningglory.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$25

Our cammo Be@rbrick designed by Japanese streetwear label A Bathing Ape isn't one of the really expensive ultra limited edition ones to collect, but still, that doesn't stop him having a big head about his awesome pedigree.

### 5 Tenchu: Rikimaru

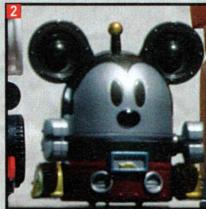
**SUPPLIER:** Croftminster  
[www.croftminster.com.au](http://www.croftminster.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$34.95

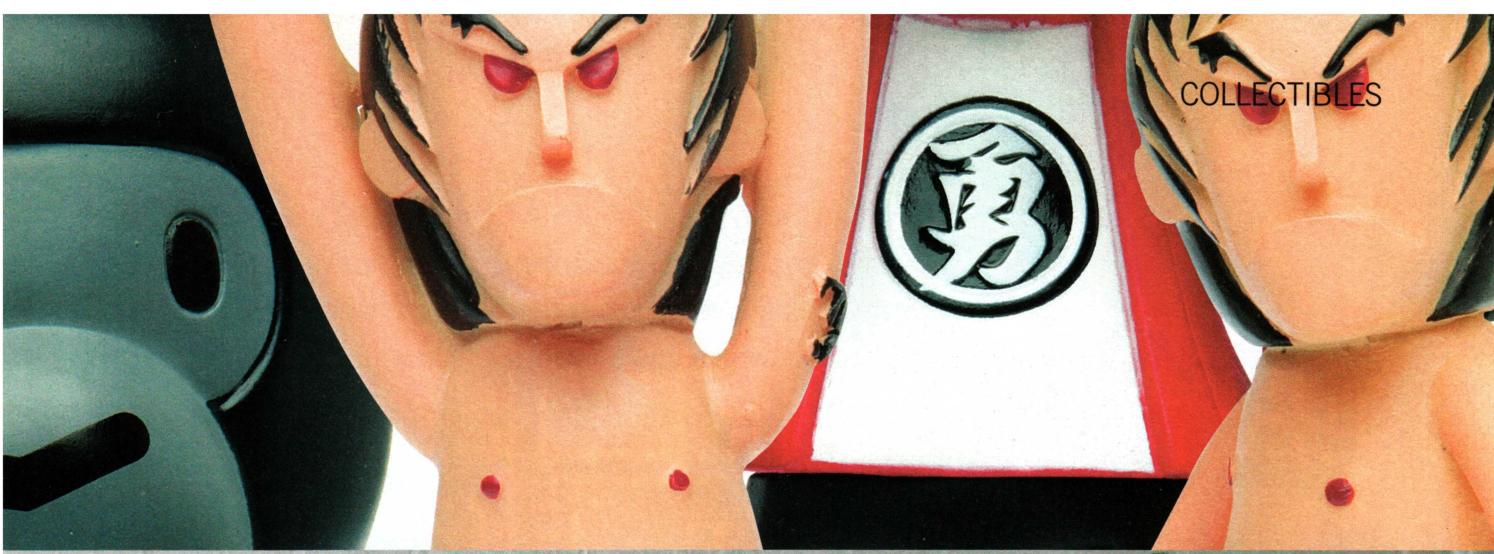
Activision's super stealth ninja game on PS2 *Tenchi: Wrath of Heaven* has spawned a new vinyl figure set with sharp weapons, including this fearsome model of Rikimaru, the leader of the Azuma Shinobi-ryu ninja sect.

### 6 Tenchu: Ayame

**SUPPLIER:** Croftminster  
[www.croftminster.com.au](http://www.croftminster.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$34.95

Ayame is famous for having a tongue as sharp as her sword, but fortunately for us, she's kept her mouth shut so far. In real life (well, the game), she's super acrobatic, having trained as a ninja since early in her childhood.





**7 FFX-2 Yuna**  
**SUPPLIER:** Croftminster  
[www.croftminster.com.au](http://www.croftminster.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$34.95

Croftminster is now distributing a gorgeous set of 8in (20.32cm) Final Fantasy X-2 figures including this finely detailed model of our returning heroine, Yuna. She's back with more attitude, and a nice line in lethal weapons.

**8 FFX-2 Paine**  
**SUPPLIER:** Croftminster  
[www.croftminster.com.au](http://www.croftminster.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$34.95

Our token goth girls love Paine the most, and you have to admit, there's nothing wrong with that strappy bondage-wear she's modelling. The strong, silent type out of the three, Paine brings a huge sword to the table. Don't mess!

**9 FFX-2 Rikku**  
**SUPPLIER:** Croftminster  
[www.croftminster.com.au](http://www.croftminster.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$34.95

Rikku's easily the most popular among fan artists and *Gaijin!* staff. Why's that? Her hair and scarf are kinda cool, in a feral way (not that there's anything wrong with that) but then there's *that* bikini. Come on now, she's *just* a doll.

**10 Virtual Reality Ninja**  
**SUPPLIER:** Toys 'R' Us  
[www.toysrus.com.au](http://www.toysrus.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$79.95

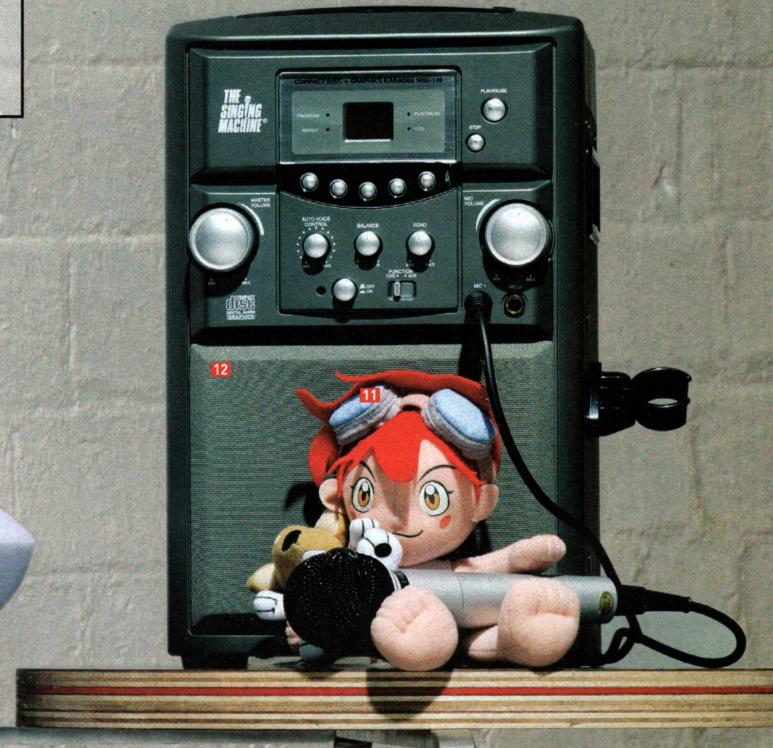
Fighting the evil virtual ninja clan means blindly flailing your arms and legs in a way sure to entertain (and maybe injure) people watching. The headset screens are Game&Watch-ish with slight 3D, but the ninja chop action rocks!

**11 Cowboy Bebop Ed**  
**SUPPLIER:** Tamarket  
[www.tamarket.com.au](http://www.tamarket.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$26

A plush Eddie? Look at those eyes: you can fully see the whites around the pupils. That means Eddie's freakin' crazy No. The *Cowboy Bebop* hyper hacker is too ballistic to take to bed with you. (By 'bed' we mean for sleeping, OK?).

**12 The Singing Machine**  
**SUPPLIER:** Toys 'R' Us  
[www.toysrus.com.au](http://www.toysrus.com.au)  
**PRICE:** \$129.95

For the hardcore karaoke addict / exhibitionist, The Singing Machine has a microphone and AV cable to plug into your TV, so you can view the words to songs if you're using a CD+Graphics (CDG) disc. Geeky!



# HAI! WE HAVE BANDAI!

WHO  
WILL  
WIN?

Mr Green  
1/144 HGUC MS-06 ZAKU II \$22.95

Mechs can teach you a lot about fighting – but can they teach you about love? *Gaijin! Magazine* is on the hunt for the sexiest Gundam ever. Look at these three chancers distributed by Hobbyco – which one do you *really* love the most?

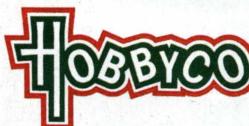
OR...

Mr Red, White & Blue?  
1/144 Buster Gundam \$11.45

OR...

Mr Purple?  
1/144 Super Gundam \$11.45

PLACE  
KISSES  
ON PAGE  
NOW!



## Hobbyco/Bandai Gundam modelling competition

Some mags have photo comps where you can send in a photo of you... maybe chillin' out with your pet, or your gang or your riced up car or whatever... yeah? We *could* do that (hell, we're not saying we won't do that, ever). But seeing as this is the Mecha special issue:



**SHOW US  
YOUR MECHS!**

**WIN!**

I OF 4 GUNDAM  
PRIZES WORTH  
\$125 EACH!

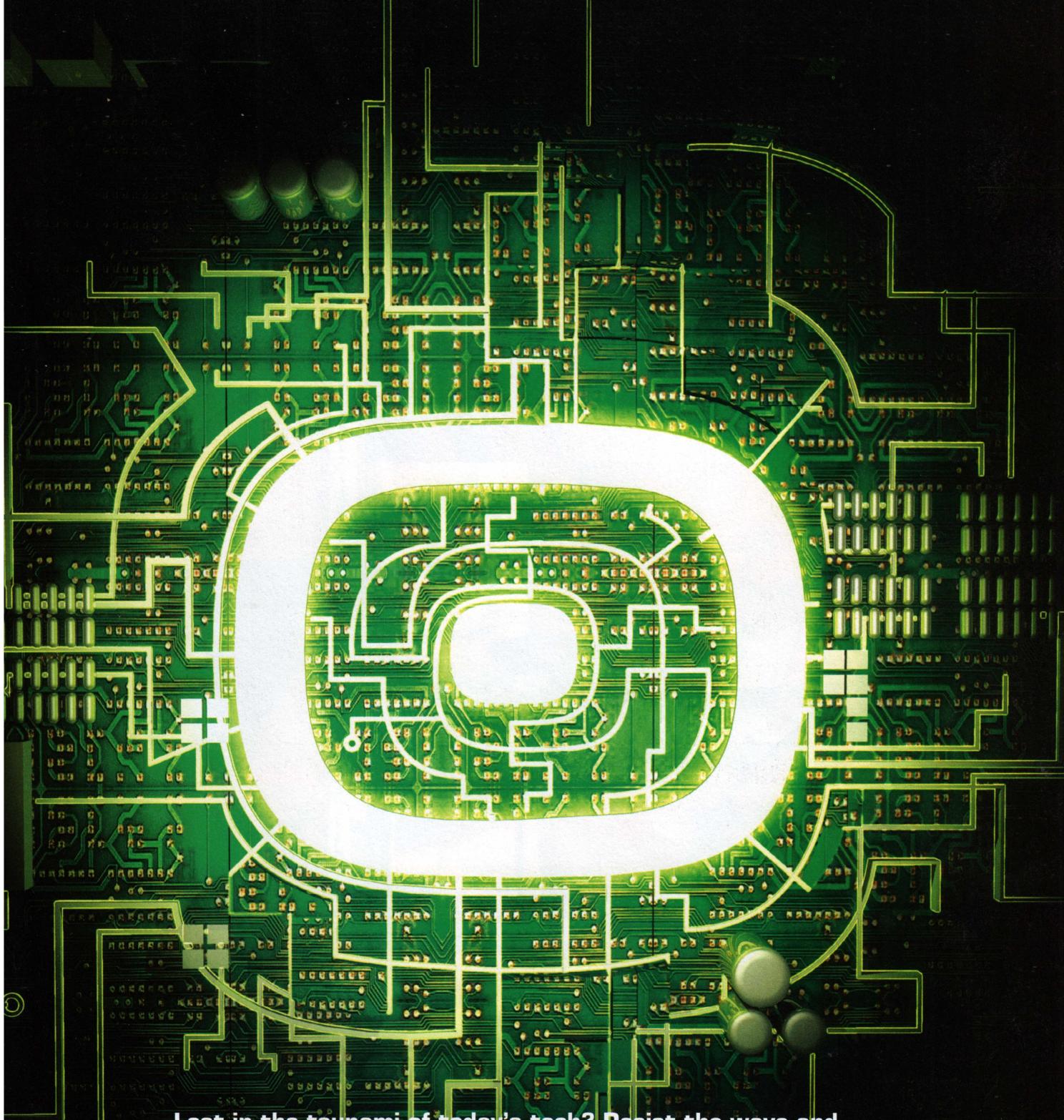
## HOW TO ENTER:

- 1) Build, modify and paint a Bandai Gundam figure.
- 2) By modify, we mean: 'make it look sexier or tougher than it looks on the box it came in'. Stick extra weapons on it if you have to; give it a super deluxe paint job; stencil on your graf tag; be creative. Then...
- 3) Take two photos of it: one of the Gundam model by itself on a white background, and one with you holding it next to your face. Easy!
- 4) Send the photos to us along with your name, contact phone number and postal address via one of these methods: email: digital pics (hi res 300dpi) to [win@gaijinmag.com](mailto:win@gaijinmag.com) / or post: Gaijin! Hobbyco/Bandai Gundam Comp, PO Box 2286, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012. Winners will appear next issue.
- 5) Visit our website [www.gaijinmag.com](http://www.gaijinmag.com) for full competition details, including terms and conditions.
- 6) Remember: entries close on **Tuesday 23 March 2004**.

## MODIFY A GUNDAM MODEL!

Win a super limited edition \$125 voucher to spend on Bandai Gundam kits from Hobbyco!

Build, modify and paint a small Bandai Gundam figure. You can buy one here: [www.hobbyco.com.au](http://www.hobbyco.com.au) Take photos. Send the photos to us for judging before **Tuesday 23 March 2004**.



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## PHOTO DIARY

Midday, Saturday, and no sign of life.

Everything you need for a lazy Sunday morning in bed

Getting ready for Saturday night

The morning after a Japan international soccer game

## Japan Notebook No2 An Apartment in Nishi-Azabu

The trials of leasing an apartment in Tokyo are legendary. It's impossible to find anything big enough, and often an owner won't deal with *gaijin* – especially *gaijin* without a local company's guarantee. And leaving aside the exorbitant rent, there's the deposit. If you're lucky, it will be four months rent in advance, but more likely six, of which at least two are non-refundable, a 'gift' to the owners.

Most young Japanese can't afford the deposit on one small room, and even if they can, they end up living in a grim, concrete dormitory city like Chiba or Kanegawa, an hour or more outside of Tokyo.

Which is why, if you happen to have an apartment near the centre of things, it can get a little crazy. Friends who miss the last train home crash on the floor (a thin Muji futon, a pillow and duvet are kept in a hallway cupboard for this purpose), or at weekends, use the bathroom to get ready for a date. There are the occasional girlfriends who take over the space – the photographer Kyoichi Tsuzuki's small book, *Tokyo: A Certain Style*, reveals that the Japanese are among the untidiest people on earth – and find every excuse not to return to their over-crowded family homes.

I lived in a new, three-room unit in Nishi-Azabu, a stone's throw from Roppongi. Obsessively, for six months, I photographed everything that went on there. Well, nearly everything.

Creed O'Hanlon  
Sydney, 2003

Making the most of very little, living and working on the floor.

# The Art of War – Sun Tzu

Whether commanding an army in the field or performing a hostile takeover, Sun Tzu's insights pierce into the very heart of conflict.



It's a rare thing when words written over 2,000 years ago are not only just as pertinent today as when they were scribed, but have found relevance in many more applications than could have ever been imagined at inception.

*The Art of War* is more than just a textbook of tactics and strategies for winning a battle, it speaks about the universal theme of conflict – a theme that finds itself underlying a significant proportion of human endeavour.

On the surface it seems strange to associate a thing as tragic as war with the concept of 'art' – something that's by its nature reflective of the creative aspects of human nature. Yet that's the point of *The Art of War*. According to Sun Tzu, war isn't necessarily about fighting, it's about achieving victory, and his main teaching is that the best way to achieve victory is to defeat the enemy without seeing a single bow bent or spear broken – literally or figuratively.

Nothing is more difficult than armed struggle, states Sun Tzu, and as such, avoiding armed conflict is his primary concern. Therefore, achieving victory depends on understanding the nature of conflict, and exploiting every possible opportunity for success with the minimum expenditure of effort. Given this, Sun Tzu states

**'The victorious side first wins, then seeks battle, while the defeated side enters battle, then seeks victory.'**

that to surely win, you should attack where there is no defence, and to surely defend, you should defend where there is no attack. Sun Tzu places far more emphasis on intelligence, deception and psychological warfare than he does on physical fighting. Under an enlightened general, all battles are won before they are even fought. Victory is also all about understanding not only your enemy, but also understanding yourself. This is because *The Art of War* is essentially a Taoist manual for managing conflict, and brings along the Taoist view that the person represents the world.

Finding strength in weakness; finding order through disorder; structuring your forces with the form of formlessness; striking emptiness with fullness, and fullness with emptiness – these are all Taoist precepts that see the universe as a place of balance, with contradictory forces that complement each other – and where conflict is, by its nature, against this balance.

As the great Tao philosopher, Lao Tzu, said, 'weapons are instruments of ill omen, conflict is a negative quality'. This in itself might, paradoxically, explain why it is that the world's first manual for conducting war came from a nation with a deep underlying belief that conflict is

negative. Sun Tzu understood that occasionally conflict was unavoidable, so he wanted to make sure that when it did happen, it was resolved as quickly as possible, and with minimal loss.

Given Sun Tzu's approach is to understand the universal principles that underlie all conflict, *The Art of War* has found application in many other human endeavours, primarily business in the corporate world. Understanding your terrain suddenly relates to knowing the market and the conditions for success in your business. Having your formations flow like water means maintaining flexibility to adapt to any situation. Appearing weak when you are strong, and inept when you are capable now means deceiving your competition as to your direction and strategy while you learn everything you can about theirs'.

Despite the modern applications, the book still maintains a significant presence in its own right, and whether or not you are involved in corporate pincer movements and management echelons, all of us who deal with conflict in our daily lives can find value in Sun Tzu's timeless sentiments.



AUTHOR: TIM DEAN

Tim Dean is a like a warrior-poet, but in a philosopher-journalist sort of way, which is not like a warrior-poet at all.



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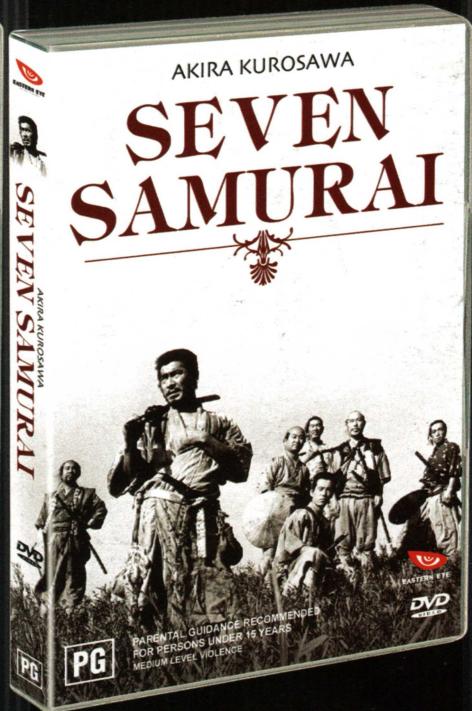
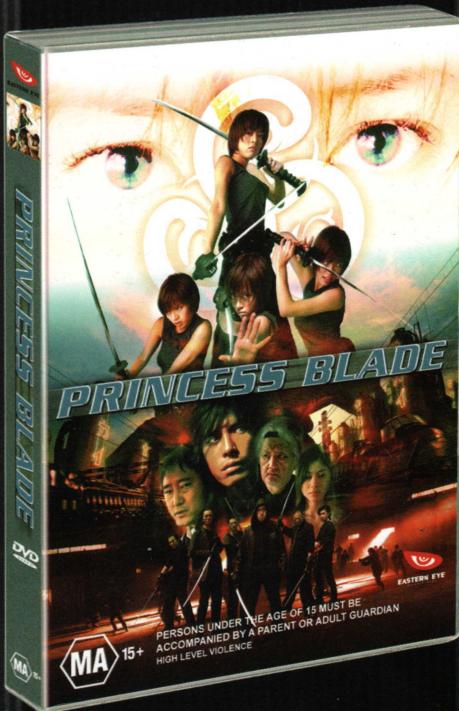
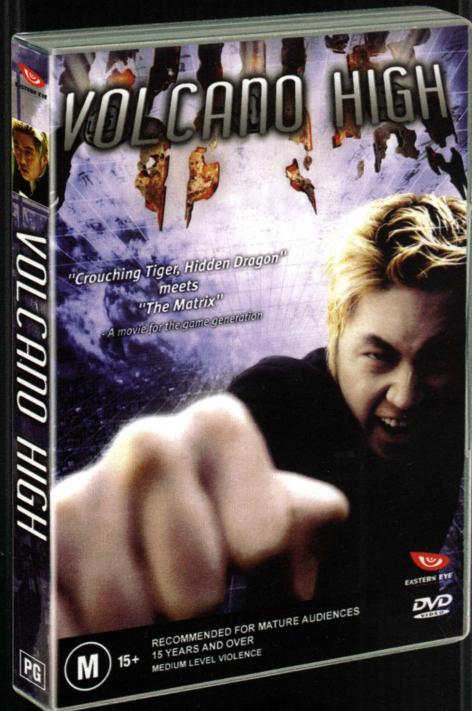
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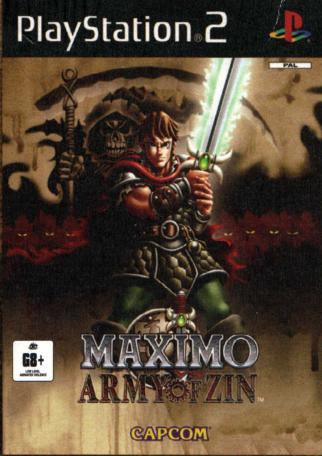
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